

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

China: Issues in Development — II

National and Local Level Planning:
China, The USSR, India N.K. Chandra 115

China's Policy Towards Tibet
and its Neighbours Liu Xingwu & Alan 136

'Candidate Superpower' Among the 1980s:
China's Emergence of China in World Politics G.P. Deshpande 160

Experiments in Socialist Practice:
Some Impressions of China M. Indu Bhattacharya 169

176

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- 1 A Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977
- 2 See R Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy' *Journal of Comparative Economics*, December 1979, pp 325-45

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14

N.K. CHANDRA

National and Local Level Planning : China, the USSR, India

THE NEED for planning at the national level has been felt in developing countries from before the last world war, and it became one of the main elements in the programmes of nationalist leaders in the erstwhile colonies and semi-colonies. Without ignoring the potential benefits of foreign trade the proponents of planning put the main emphasis on a coordinated development of different sectors of the economy for subserving the demands of indigenous consumers and producers. Soviet industrialisation of the 1930s exercised considerable fascination over the Third World intelligentsia and greatly influenced actual planning in many of these countries. But the results were not encouraging. The Chinese too veered away from the Soviet type of centralised planning from the late 1950s and adopted a more decentralised framework.

There is a fairly widespread view that, compared to most developing countries today or in the 1950s, the USSR on the eve of her First Plan was already much better off. Thanks to the collectivisation of farms a growing surplus was skimmed off the peasants, further, by squeezing real wages, the USSR pushed up her fixed investments to dizzy heights, so that the economy was radically transformed by the end of the Second Plan in 1937. By contrast, China in 1952 was quite poor, very little of surplus could be extracted from the peasants, real wages could not be depressed, hence investment rates remained low, and a thorough transformation of the economic structure within a short period was out of the question.

Many of these assertions are questionable. While sharing the broad conclusion that the Soviet model cannot, barring one or two exceptions, be replicated in the developing countries, we seek to provide in the present paper an alternative explanation. The framework of the paper is as follows. To begin with, the 'initial conditions' in the USSR, China and India are briefly discussed. We then examine real wages, peasants' living standards, terms of trade between industry and agriculture and investment rates in the USSR from 1928 to 1940. The same set of issues are raised for China from 1952 to the present. We then deal with the question as to why the Soviet pat-

tern is not a feasible option for most developing countries in the contemporary world, and go on to analyse the Chinese experience in decentralised planning

THE 'INITIAL CONDITIONS' IN THE USSR, CHINA AND INDIA

By 'initial conditions' is meant the level of economic and social development in the three countries named above just prior to or immediately after the launching of their respective five-year plans

Bergson estimated that Soviet gross national product (GNP) per capita in 1955 (i) amounted to 29 per cent of the contemporary US level,¹ and (ii) had increased in real terms at an annual rate of 4.7 per cent from 1928 to 1955.² It follows that the 1928 Soviet level was only 8.5 per cent of the 1955 US level. In their international comparisons project Kravis and associates estimated the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of some 30 countries, including 16 developing countries, over the years 1955 to 1975, the second poorest in 1955 was India at 7.5 per cent of the US level.³ Thus the USSR in 1928 was not better off than most developing countries in the 1950s.

As for China, Eckstein found that the agricultural output of China exceeded India's by 89 per cent in 1952,⁴ since China had a population larger by 55 per cent, the per capita difference was only 22 per cent. Respective per capita outputs of the major industrial goods in China and India in 1955 were: steel 4.6 and 4.4 kilograms, coal 159 and 100 kilograms, power 20 and 26 kwh, cement 7.3 and 12 kilograms and cotton cloth 7 and 16 metres.⁵ It is by no means obvious which of the two was industrially richer. On the whole, it may not be unreasonable to presume that they had a similar level of per capita income which was only a few percentages below that of the USSR in 1928.

On the other hand, the per capita outputs in the USSR of 1928 were often, but not always, higher than the Indian or Chinese level. The Soviet figures on industry were: steel 28 kilograms, oil 77 kilograms, coal 225 kilograms, power 33 kwh, cement 12 kilograms, and cotton 17 metres.⁶ Similarly, in food consumption per capita the USSR had a lead over China and India.⁷ However, the Soviet lead in agriculture and industry (including construction) was neutralised by the relatively larger contribution from other sectors to the net domestic product (NDP) in China and India vis-à-vis the USSR, the respective proportions were 26.2, 34.7 and 36.2. In any case, all these economies were dominated by agriculture with an NDP share of 40 to 45 per cent, and an employment share of 73 to 81 per cent.⁸ The proportion of urban to total population was again roughly the same. In social indicators like birth and death rates, infant mortality, life expectancy and literacy there was no uniform ranking between the three countries during the reference years.⁹

THE SOVIET SCENE 1928-49

That the Soviet Union had an extraordinarily high rate of growth in national income in the 1930s is well recognised. Here we shall discuss

whether this was achieved at the cost of the living standards of the masses

Most scholars, whether Soviet or Western,¹⁰ have shown that real wages in the USSR fell drastically in the 1930s, though the magnitudes differed. Taking 1928 or 1929 = 100, their indices of real wages varied from 46 to 83 in 1932, 56 to 86 in 1937, and 52 to 91 in 1940. We may focus on Chapman's study, the only full-length monograph on the subject. In her estimate the real wage indices were 69 in 1937 and 63 in 1940, while those for urban per capita purchase of goods were 111 and 97 respectively.¹¹ The results are anomalous since workers and employees constituted practically the whole of the urban work force since the early 1930s, the discrepancy is reduced, but far from eliminated, by allowing for the fall in the number of dependents per worker.¹² Furthermore, considering the number of urban workers (estimated by us) and Chapman's estimates of the average wage and expenditure pattern, it is found that workers' purchases accounted for only 37.7 per cent in 1937, and 42.5 per cent in 1940, of the total urban retail sales, this too is a serious drawback of the estimates since it is difficult to envisage who could have bought the remainder.¹³

The basic reason for these anomalies, in our view, lies in the choice of money wages. All scholars, including the Soviets, have used the money wage reported every month to the statistical agencies by the enterprises. It is known, however, that actual wage payments were far in excess since the early 1930s, but not earlier.¹⁴ From an unpublished estimate by Bergson and Goldware¹⁵ of the comprehensive (or actual) wage bill for urban areas, we deducted the pay of party officials, etc., as well as the maintenance cost of prison labourers, and divided the residual by the number of urban workers.¹⁶ This estimate of actual urban money wage exceeded Chapman's estimate of wage by 61 and 39 per cent respectively in 1937 and 1940, deflated by her cost of living indices,¹⁷ our real wage indices for these two years came respectively to 111 and 88 with 1928 = 100. For 1932 some of the basic data are lacking. Hence we made alternative calculations and found that if allowance is made for the comprehensive wages, the urban real wage index for 1932 would be in the range 76 to 106, the actual was probably nearer the lower than the upper end of the range.¹⁸ Real wages might well have been lower than the 1928 level in certain other years like 1933 and 1940, but not in years like 1929-31 or 1934-38. The decline in 1932-33 could be attributed to poor crops, and that in 1940, to the approaching war. Besides, as Nove remarked,¹⁹ the number of workers increased phenomenally since 1928, mostly from the ranks of the peasantry who joined at the bottom of the wage scale, and hence the average real wage was depressed, but that of the old workers could even have gone up.

The publication of a monograph by Barsov,²⁰ a Soviet scholar, has greatly altered the perspective on the terms of trade of agriculture and the living standards of peasants during the crucial years 1928-32. Earlier writings emphasised the forced delivery of grains, etc., at unchanged

prices, overlooking the enormous gains of the peasants (or at least a section of them) from the free or kolkhoz market. Basing himself on Barsov's data, Ellman²¹ showed that the terms of trade of agriculture vis-a-vis industry improved by 30 per cent from 1928 to 1932. Regarding living standards, we have estimated from Barsov's data that the per capita consumption of goods by the peasants in the years 1929-32 was greater than or equal to that in 1928. Barsov's data in conjunction with the official time series on industrial production show that per capita consumption of goods by the non-agricultural population also increased by 8 per cent in 1928-32. A more pessimistic alternative calculation for 1928-32, based partly on Soviet sources and partly on Hodgman's index for the 'large industry' sector,²² suggests a fall in per capita consumption of goods to the tune of 27 per cent for the agricultural, and of 8 per cent for the non-agricultural population.²³

For the period since 1932, barring the famine year of 1933, there is a general consensus among scholars²⁴ that life for the peasants became much less arduous. Their terms of trade in 1937 were more favourable than in 1928, although there are no comprehensive data. Bergson estimated the rise in average realised farm prices for a large number of agricultural products (which accounted for the bulk of the marketed output) at 539 per cent, while the official Moscow retail prices of manufactured consumer goods, according to Chapman, rose by 543 per cent,²⁵ prices of industrial inputs into agriculture (as with producer goods in general) should not have increased much, if at all. In 1928-37 labour productivity rose 2.6 times in industry, but remained stagnant in agriculture, if this aspect is considered along with the price ratios, the peasants would have been worse off. On the other hand, State investments at 'comparable prices' increased from 1.0 billion for the whole pre-plan period, 1918-28, to an annual average of 2.1 to 2.4 billion rubles in the plan years up to 1940.²⁶ Besides, from Chapman's indices of urban and national per capita purchases of goods,²⁷ one can derive the corresponding index for rural areas at 139 for 1937 and 134 in 1940 with 1928 = 100. Hence the peasant's material conditions improved considerably. We shall revert to this issue later.

Thus, considering the whole period 1928-40, and not a few isolated years of very bad harvests, etc., it is difficult to sustain the thesis that the rapid progress achieved in the USSR was due to a squeeze on the peasants or the workers. On the contrary, living standards improved significantly, social outlays on health and education increased in real terms even faster than per capita consumption of goods.²⁸

How then does one explain the sharp increase (in real terms) in the Soviet rate of accumulation, i.e., the ratio of net investment to the net material product (NMP), in the 1930s? At constant 1928 prices Barsov's figures show a 4.8-fold jump in the volume, or, alternatively, an increase from 14.8 to 44.1 per cent in the rate of accumulation in the NMP from 1928 to 1932.²⁹ Yet there was hardly any fall in per capita consumption, since

national income rose by as much as 60 per cent. From Bergson's estimates at constant 1928 prices one finds that the accumulation rate increased from 19 per cent in 1928 to 43 per cent in 1937, at constant 1937 prices the gross accumulation rate (i.e., gross investment divided by NMP *plus* depreciation) in a few benchmark years since 1928 reached a maximum of 26 per cent in 1950 and 1955.³⁰ Interestingly, at current prices the accumulation rate as a percentage of the national income increased at a much slower rate from 17.0 in 1928 to 27.4 in 1931, and fell to 24.4 in 1935, 23.9 in 1937 and 19.4 in 1938.³¹ Considering that the Soviet national income estimates exclude many services sectors, while their concept of accumulation is identical to net investment in the Western sense, the Soviet investment rates at current prices do not seem to be excessive compared to those of many developing countries or Japan in the 1970s.³² Kaplan is one of the few Western scholars to have compared Soviet and American rates of investment which, according to him, have been roughly equal and, except for war and depression years, virtually constant. Unfortunately, we have too few Soviet observations to be sure of this.³³

THE CHINESE SCENE 1952-80

In purely economic terms China's achievements have been far more impressive than those of India or of an 'average' Third World country, but by no means exceptional,³⁴ the Soviet Union in fact had a more impressive record. During China's First Five-Year Plan, 1953-57, per capita income (NMP) increased at an annual rate of 6.3 per cent, for a much longer period, 1952-79, the rate of increase was only 4.0 per cent.³⁵ By contrast, the Soviet growth rate in 1928-32 was 11.0 per cent at 1928 prices and around 12.8 per cent in 1928-37.³⁶ By 1937, if not earlier, the Soviet economy was transformed, peasants (with own farms or in the *kolkhozy*) constituted only one-half of the total population.³⁷ As late as 1979 the labour force in China's rural people's communes (with only a handful in non-agricultural activities) was still over three-fourths of the national aggregate.³⁸ Furthermore, the accumulation rate (as a proportion of the NMP) at current prices has been quite high in China, the percentages were, according to a Chinese scholar, 24.2 in 1953-57, 30.8 in 1958-62, 26.3 in 1966-70, 33.0 in 1971-75, and 33.3 in 1976-80.³⁹ Field's estimates of gross investment as a proportion of the GDP at constant 1957 prices are particularly high in certain years, in percentage these were 14.6 in 1952, 25.4 in 1957, 32.1 in 1965, 33.3 in 1970 and 35.4 in 1971.⁴⁰ Thus, although China did not raise her investment rate at constant prices comparable to the USSR in the early 1930s, at current prices the Chinese rate gradually moved upwards exceeding the Soviet levels. It would seem that the capital-output ratio in China has risen significantly and was generally above that in the USSR.⁴¹

Liu and Yeh believe that China stepped up her investment rate in the First Plan by reducing the living standards of the population, daily per capita calorie intake from food crops declined, in their view, from 1,936 in 1933 to 1,833 in the 1950s, and per capita expenditure on all goods and ser-

vices at constant 1,933 yuans fell from 56 in 1933 to 48 in 1952 or 50 in 1957.⁴² Later Western researches do not corroborate this finding on calorie intake, Wiens' figures on calorie intake from the same sources are 1,789 in the 1930s, 1,802 in 1952 and 1,848 in 1957.⁴³ As for non-food items, China in 1933 had in all likelihood an expenditure distribution at least as unequal as India's in the early 1950s where the top decile of families accounted for 36 per cent of the total non-food expenditure.⁴⁴ It follows that even if there was a mild decline in per capita non-food expenditure in China from 1933 to 1952 or 1957 (as suggested by Liu and Yeh) there could still have been a moderate improvement for the vast majority simply through egalitarian redistribution after the revolution.

The Chinese officially claim an increase in per capita consumption from an index of 100 in 1952 to 123 in 1957, 126 in 1965, 157 in 1975 and 185 in 1979, the corresponding indices were 100, 117, 116, 143 and 165 respectively for peasants, and 100, 126, 137, 181 and 214 for the rest. Per capita output of major agricultural products, however, increased very little, if at all, the index for 1979 with 1957 = 100 was 112 for grains, 89 for cotton, 90 for oil-bearing crops, 176 for meat, and 92 for fish. By contrast light industry output (largely consumer goods) rose 5.8 times over the same period. The output of many traditional industrial products rose significantly, and a large number of new items entered the market in increasing quantities.⁴⁵ However, the improvements in the living standards were by no means steady, during the unprecedented drought of 1959-61 compounded by the withdrawal of Soviet technical and economic aid, per capita consumption should have fallen well below the earlier peak of 1957.

On the real wages of 'workers and staff' the evidence on trends is conflicting. Based on older official data of a scattered nature Howe's index went up from 100 in 1952 to 133.8 in 1957, then fell to 117.8 in 1963 before rising again to 145.7 in 1972.⁴⁶ More recently, Ma Hong, a leading Chinese scholar, has confirmed Howe's index for 1957, but from 1957 to 1978 real wages in the State-owned (as distinct from collectively owned, i.e., by communes, etc.) units, according to him, fell by 11.5 per cent.⁴⁷ From the official budget surveys of workers' families we estimate that the monthly money wage of a worker rose from 69 to 136 yuans in 1957-80, further, the cost of living index for the same group rose by 16.4 per cent in 1957-79. If the latter index went up by another 10 per cent in 1979-80, the increase in real wage in 1957-80 would be 53 per cent.⁴⁸ This is more in line with Howe's than with Ma Hong's results. Klatt believes that real wages 'improved slightly' in 1953-57 and then remained practically stable up to the late 1970s.⁴⁹ On the other hand, the number of dependents per worker (as in the USSR in the 1930s) fell sharply over the years from 2.29 in 1957 or 2.40 in 1964 to only 0.83 in the last quarter of 1980.⁵⁰ It follows that even with a mild fall in real wages the living standards in workers' families went up by a considerable margin.

While living standards in rural areas may have also gone up as noted

earlier, the standards are still low and not very different from other developing countries. Per capita consumption figures for 1979 were: edible oil 2.4 kg, meat 6.5 kg, sugar 0.8 kg, cotton cloth, including garments, 5.2 metres, shoes 0.4 pair, etc.⁵¹

The problem of the peasants' terms of trade is more complicated in China⁵² than in the USSR. With 1952 = 100 this index (of the ratio of the 'list' purchase prices of farm products to the retail prices of industrial goods sold in rural areas) rose to 118 in 1957, 143 in 1965, 172 in 1975 and 218 in 1979.⁵³ On the other hand, from Liu and Yeh one finds that the terms of trade index of agriculture for 1933 would be 198 with 1952 = 100.⁵⁴ Hence, despite gradual improvements since 1952 the pre-war parity was attained only at the end of the 1970s. Furthermore, if one considers the differential rates of growth of labour productivity in the two sectors, i.e., the 'double-factoral terms of trade' or the concept of 'equivalent exchange' or 'labour standard' in the Marxian sense, the peasants were at an even greater disadvantage. For, productivity in agriculture went up by a negligible 5.2 per cent in 1957-79 as against 86 per cent in State-owned industries,⁵⁵ although in other industrial enterprises the percentage rise was probably much smaller, there is little doubt that overall industrial productivity rose significantly. Apart from prices and productivities, there are other factors affecting the income terms of trade. Thus as a proportion of gross crop output agricultural taxes were reduced from 13.2 per cent to a little over 5.0 per cent in 1952-74, State agricultural investments in real terms increased five-fold over these years.⁵⁶ Certain items like diesel were sold in the rural areas at a discount of up to 30 per cent.⁵⁷ On the other side, Wenssen, a Chinese scholar, points out that the relative prices of industrial inputs into agriculture are higher in China than in the international market.⁵⁸ Perkins thinks that the peasant could get higher prices for his products in the absence of State purchases, moreover, the prices he paid for industrial goods might contain an element of tax in the form of excess profits.⁵⁹

In view of the complexity of issues a definitive answer cannot yet be given. Even supposing that the peasants' terms of trade during most of the post-liberation years were below the pre-war level, it does not mean either that the peasants suffered as a consequence or that they would have been better off if the pre-war level could have been restored quickly. On the improvement in peasants' living standards we have already cited official data. Now if the peasants' terms of trade improved faster than they did, the rate of accumulation would surely have been lower, adversely affecting the employment expansion in non-agricultural sectors. From 1952 to 1979 the labour force outside the people's communes jumped from 25 to 100 million, accounting respectively for 12 and 25 per cent of the work force in the economy.⁶⁰ In the absence of such a mammoth transfer of manpower, and in view of the stagnation in labour productivity in agriculture, the land-man ratio would have worsened, depressing the peasants' living standard. In other words, the terms of trade question in a country undergoing a

transformation in the occupational structure (e.g., the USSR in 1928-40 or China since 1952) has to be viewed differently from that in other countries with a stable structure or from that in commerce between nations with little mobility of labour between them

THE RELEVANCE OF THE SOVIET MODEL FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

In this section we first examine some specificities of the Soviet economy around 1928 and the political compulsions that propelled its march towards rapid industrialisation. The example of North Korea, another case of outstanding success, is then taken up briefly to reiterate some of the main arguments. We move on to a summary description of the changing Chinese strategy and underline the basic reasons why China could not possibly industrialise herself at a comparable pace. These reasons appear to hold good for India as well as most other developing countries.

Despite her overall backwardness, the USSR in 1928 had a well-diversified industrial structure. Firstly, she produced a large number of sophisticated goods that China or India in the 1950s did not. The overall share of metal processing industries in industrial production was much higher in the former than in the latter countries, the percentages being 23.7, 7.8 to 10.6, and 8.5 respectively.⁶¹ Secondly, the Soviets relied for the most part on their own technologies (often copied without modification from those abroad), partly by choice and partly by the force of circumstances. Despite their efforts to obtain capital goods and technical know-how from Western firms on commercial terms in the 1920s, the response from the latter was far from encouraging.⁶² Later, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the USSR as an exporter of primary commodities lost heavily and had to cut back drastically her projected imports of machinery.⁶³ Thirdly, lacking capital goods the Soviets went ahead with their industrialisation plan using the most labour-intensive methods. While the saga of the Chinese peasants building on a grand scale dams, irrigation canals, etc., with bare hands, is by now well-known, few realise, to quote a recent Soviet author, that 'industrial giants were built by the manual labour of tens of thousands of people'.⁶⁴ Fourthly, this forced dependence on labour-intensive methods had a major consequence in transforming the occupational structure. While the USSR in 1928 had a large seasonal labour surplus of about 16 million in the rural areas and a maximum of 1.5 million unemployed in towns,⁶⁵ an extreme labour shortage developed since 1931 or 1932. The number of workers, as we saw earlier, jumped from 10.8 million in 1928 to 22.6 million in 1932. In construction alone the number engaged rose from 0.7 to 2.3 million in 1928-32, but then fell to 1.6 million in 1937, the corresponding figures in million for manufacturing were 3.8, 8.0 and 10.1.⁶⁶ The appearance of labour shortage in its turn provided impetus towards mechanisation and further efforts at cost reduction, as in all industrialised countries.⁶⁷ Thus, while industrial employment in 1928-32 shot up by 110 per cent, gross fixed capital rose by 184 per cent,

leading to an incremental capital-labour ratio at constant 1928 prices of 1.65 only, in the next plan the ratio went up steeply to 5.46. Simultaneously, the rise in labour productivity was accelerated from 41 per cent in 1928-32 to 83 per cent in 1932-37 for industry as a whole.⁶⁸ Fifthly, this self-reliant industrialisation drive did not come up against a raw material bottleneck owing to the extremely rich endowment of the country in practically all the necessary minerals, especially of coal, oil and iron ores. Since the minerals were available in abundance at a relatively low cost the Soviets could afford to ignore the question of efficiency in use. Last, but not the least, was the political compulsion. The USSR from its inception felt encircled by hostile capitalist powers. Internally, the kulak menace seemed to be growing since the mid-1920s, undermining the new egalitarian social fabric. In order to counter both the internal and external threats, forced collectivisation of farms and industrialisation appeared to Stalin and his supporters as the only solution consistent with the Bolshevik goals.⁶⁹

It is not suggested that the factors just mentioned were necessary, or that they are sufficient to explain the Soviet developments, or that any country that wishes to emulate the USSR must fulfil all of them. Outside East Europe the Soviet pattern seems to have been followed to a large extent in North Korea with great success. Starting after the Second World War from a low base typical of a developing country, but with considerable heavy industries left behind by the Japanese colonialists, and helped by the Soviets, the East Europeans and the Chinese, North Korea's per capita income in the late 1970s should have roughly been the same as in South Korea or a multiple of the contemporary Chinese level.⁷⁰ In the early 1960s she relied heavily on certain local resources and industries in order to satisfy local needs,⁷¹ but the emphasis shifted to large centralised projects in urban areas where two-thirds of the population are now residing. Agriculture should currently occupy around one-third of the work force against a similar ratio in industry and construction. There is too little information, however, on North Korea's economy, development strategy, technology policy, etc. In particular, one does not know how she managed to mop up the rural surplus labour, the depth and breadth of technical and economic aid from friendly countries, the evolution of wages and living standards, and so on. Nevertheless, two factors stand out. First, her per capita mineral and fuel resources are far greater than in other developing countries. Thus the per capita output of steel (1978) was 187 kg, coal (1978) 2,046 kg, power (1980) 1,955 kwh, cement (1978) 409 kg, etc.⁷² Second, from the experience of the Korean War, 1950-53, the leadership in the North concluded that a strong industrial base was vital for the country's security.

The Chinese in their turn have generally tried to combine centralised planning and local initiatives, though the emphasis varied greatly over time. On the one hand was the rich legacy of the Yen'an days, under conditions of economic blockade land reforms were introduced in a phased manner that brought the Communist Party closer than before to the pea-

sant masses, further, the peasants and village craftsmen, assisted by a few experts and party cadres, managed to produce a wide array of industrial goods using simple technologies and local resources. That a great deal of this experience could and should be replicated in rural China as a whole was one of the axioms of Mao's politics and economics.⁷³ On the other hand, Soviet technological achievements fascinated the leadership. The need to create modern industries, often with foreign technology and capital goods, has been an equally important ingredient of the overall vision of development. Mao's *Ten Great Relationships* aptly summed up the issues, although it appeared in 1956, it is a document that has been cited both during and after the Cultural Revolution.

During the First Plan, when the Soviet influence was very strong, the Chinese did not neglect the handicrafts sector where output increased by 13 per cent a year as against 18 per cent for industry as a whole.⁷⁴ During the Great Leap Forward there was a phenomenal spurt in backyard furnaces and other small-scale rural industries. Many of these were poorly conceived and had to be closed down from 1962. But with the onset of the Cultural Revolution there was a fresh impetus and over time many units that appeared to be inefficient earlier became viable through expansion and a moderate degree of mechanisation or modernisation.⁷⁵ The Cultural Revolution phase also saw a fairly rapid (by international standards) growth in the large factory sector. The annual growth rate in industrial output in 1965-75 was 10.4 per cent which was marginally lower than the rate of 11.2 per cent in 1976-80, the post-Mao period when the emphasis shifted towards a modernisation of the economy.⁷⁶ However, even now most Chinese scholars recognise that in order to maintain a high level of employment, conserve fuel resources, and ensure balanced regional development, handicrafts and small-scale units will continue to play an important role for a long time to come, we shall return to this later.

That the modern factory sector has become highly capital-intensive, making it almost impossible for China to follow the Soviet path can be demonstrated as follows. From the figures given earlier in this section on gross fixed capital stock and employment in industry, it can be seen that in 1928-32 gross fixed investment per additional worker at 1928 prices was 5,354 rubles or 32.2 times the 1928 per capita NMP of 166 rubles.⁷⁷ In China from 1952 to 1957 the incremental gross stock of fixed capital at historical cost⁷⁸ in the State-owned industrial enterprise was 16.5 billion yuans with an additional employment of 2.4 million, ignoring price changes (which were small for investment goods), gross fixed investment per worker was 6,933 yuans or 66.7 times the per capita NMP of 1952. Thus the ratio was more than twice as high as in the Soviet First Plan. This ratio measures, not uniquely, the 'real' costs of expanding factory employment. The higher the ratio the more difficult it is for an economy to bring about a major change in the employment pattern in favour of the factory sector. It is worth noting that despite attempts at economising fixed capital and the rising NMP per head, the ratio fluctuated in China at a high level in subsequent periods.

99.0 in 1957-65, 47.2 in 1965-75, 84.1 in 1975-79, 73.1 in 1957-75. We have not given the corresponding Soviet figures for the years beyond 1932 which must have also been quite high, this is because a drastic transformation in the Soviet employment structure was completed by 1932: an acute labour shortage had already surfaced, and industrial employment increased at a moderate tempo after 1932.⁷⁹

Mineral resources, particularly fuel, may have constituted another major bottleneck to China's rapid modernisation. In 1979 her per capita outputs were 654 kg for coal, 109 kg for crude oil, 290 kwh for power, 36 kg for steel and 76 kg for cement, the corresponding Soviet figures in 1940 were 849, 159, 249, 94 and 30 respectively.⁸⁰ Except for power and cement the Chinese, even in 1979, were a considerable distance behind the Soviet Union as it was in 1940. Of course, low production need not imply a poor endowment of resources, lack of knowledge about reserves and, more important, lack of effective demand may be the underlying reasons. While this is true, it is nevertheless doubtful whether per capita output in China in the foreseeable future can match those obtaining in the industrially advanced countries in the 1960s or 1970s.

Among other major developing countries India's position is far worse than China's in the two crucial respects just mentioned. The ratio of incremental fixed capital per worker in the large factory sector to per capita NDP in the base year, both at constant 1960-61 prices, was rather low at 33.0 in 1951-61, but shot up to 119.4 in 1961-71, while data are lacking for the more recent years, the ratio is unlikely to have gone down in the last decade.⁸¹ Per capita outputs in the major resource-based industries in 1980-81 lagged far behind China's, the Indian figures being: coal 176 kg, power 177 kwh, crude oil 16 kg, steel 14 kg, and cement 28 kg.⁸²

If it is unlikely for India and China, countries generally thought to be very rich in resources, to succeed in achieving a major shift towards modern industries in their national income and employment structure through centralised planning at the national level, the likelihood is even smaller for most other developing countries. Politically, too, the necessity of such a structural change for reasons of national security in the near future is not felt by the political leadership in any of these countries. Hence North Korea appears to be more of an exception than the rule among the developing countries on both economic and political counts.

DECENTRALISED PLANNING IN CHINA

In this section we discuss the Chinese experience in decentralised planning. Beginning with some aspects of fiscal devolution and the management of large industrial enterprises, we go on to describe how the rural economy has evolved under decentralised planning. Lastly, we consider whether the Chinese economy is growing in a 'cellular' rather than in an integrated manner.

After the socialist transformation of private enterprises in the mid-1950s the centre virtually controlled all major units, even those managed

by the provinces had their products centrally allocated. Four-fifths of all budgetary investments in 1955-57 were directly controlled by the centre and went to the centrally managed enterprises. By June 1958 nearly 80 per cent of all central units were transferred to the provinces, in terms of output the share of such units fell from 46 to 27 per cent in 1957-58. The share of the central government in total expenditure by central and local governments came down from 78 to 48 per cent in 1955-60.⁸³ In capital construction the part financed by local authorities, including provinces, and the enterprises themselves increased from 8.6 per cent in 1957 to 9.7 per cent in 1965, 18.8 per cent in 1975 and 21.0 per cent in 1979.⁸⁴ In the mid-1960s less than one-tenth of the enterprises were centrally managed, though their output share was much higher.⁸⁵ In Shanghai this output share was reduced from 46.0 per cent to a paltry 6.3 per cent between 1957 and 1970.⁸⁶ Further, the number of centrally allocated materials increased sharply from 28 in 1952 to 235 in 1956, but then fell. In the mid-1960s the number was between 100 and 200. In general, if an area is self-sufficient in a raw material, it will be subject to local rather than central planning and allocation.⁸⁷ Provinces sometimes build factories reducing supplies of raw materials to other provinces, causing disruption in the process.⁸⁸ There is the well-known case of Chekiang province refusing to send some materials to Shanghai, with the first secretary of the provincial party declaring that 'Chekiang is not a colony of Shanghai'.⁸⁹ During the Cultural Revolution Shenyang, a city in the northeast specialising in heavy industry, reduced its dependence on the other regions from 70 per cent to 30 per cent of its requirements of agricultural and consumer goods.⁹⁰ The provinces have also got since 1958 more powers in tax management and price control.⁹¹ Finally, taxes on large enterprises skim off the major part of the profits. Thus the Shanghai Bicycle Company paid to the State 2.8 billion yuans in taxes and profits from 1956 to 1980 and received in return only 32.6 million yuans in loan for investment.⁹² At the other end, small units with profits up to 600 yuans in the early 1970s or 3000 yuans in the late 1970s paid no taxes at all.⁹³

In the decentralised planning framework the main emphasis in rural China was on increasing production and employment opportunities in a labour-intensive manner, and not on raising the average labour productivity. Whether in construction, agriculture or non-agricultural activities the use of labour was promoted so that rural underemployment was more or less eliminated by the 1970s.

The annual campaigns during the winter and the spring to build water works and other construction facilities for boosting agricultural production absorbed in the 1970s 20 per cent to 30 per cent of the total labour time of the rural work force. One estimate put the total number of seasonal workers at over 100 million or nearly 35 million man-years in 1975.⁹⁴ The improvement in water supply was quite evident as the irrigated area rose from 35 to 47 million hectares in 1957-79, however, the multiple cropping index hardly increased from 1.41 to 1.49 over the same period. The effect

was exclusively on intensification of agriculture than on an extension of cultivated area which actually declined from 112 to 100 million hectares ⁹⁵ The value of agricultural output per hectare, however, doubled during this time The agricultural labour force rose 56 per cent so that productivity increased by a mere 28 per cent ⁹⁶ On the other hand, man-days per worker per year went up significantly by 30 to 86 per cent so that agricultural productivity per man-day declined somewhat ⁹⁷

Intensification of agriculture meant a shift towards more labour-intensive activities (e.g. cultivation of vegetables, tobacco, sugar, etc. and hog-raising in lieu of grain cultivation) as well as a shift towards more labour-intensive methods of cultivating the traditional crops, despite a trend towards mechanisation The output from the labour-intensive sectors of agriculture rose at an annual rate of 3.5 per cent a year in 1957-74 as against 2.1 per cent for grains As for the second factor, the spread of composting absorbed a great deal of manpower, man-days devoted to it may have increased from 6,719 to 9,563 million in the course of 1957-74, i.e., an increment of approximately 10 million man-years Compared to the situation in the early 1930s labour requirements per hectare in the mid-1970s rose 5.0 times for wheat and maize, 1.5 times for paddy, 2.3 times for cotton, and so on At the same time mechanisation made enormous progress From 1957 to 1975 rural power consumption rose from 0.1 to 27.0 billion kwh, use of mechanical power (in the form of tractors, power tillers, etc.) from 1.0 to 92.7 million HP, and the application of chemical fertilisers increased from 0.8 to 48.0 million tons in physical units ⁹⁸ The latter was supplemented, rather than replaced, by organic manure (compost), the use of which increased from 12.3 to 17.5 million tons over the same period ⁹⁹

The really novel aspect of rural development under decentralised planning has been the creation of small rural industries,¹⁰⁰ especially the five majors—iron and steel, farm machinery, chemical fertilisers, cement and energy (coal and power), other branches include textile, electronics, paper etc Leaving aside a few catering to the wider national and international markets, most enterprises are integrated with the local economy for both raw materials and markets A good part of industrial inputs into agriculture is locally manufactured and many units process agricultural raw materials Consequently, the burden on the transportation system is reduced and local self-sufficiency is promoted Next, the units require such small amounts of fixed capital that there is hardly any dependence on central assistance except at the margin For technology, however, they generally depend on national or provincial bodies Recently, in the province of Jiangsu small units entered into as many as 100 contracts with scientific and training organisations for improving their performance ¹⁰¹ Furthermore, although the employment generated is quite modest, the enterprises helped spread an industrial and scientific culture among the rural masses

Critics of small industries like Chen Bingfu have claimed that these

were set up 'blindly' causing raw material shortages for better equipped large factories, besides, they are wasteful of energy, produce poor equality goods and have high costs of production. Yet the same author recognises the need for 'technological pluralism' in order to protect employment.¹⁰² Ma Hong, a leading advocate of the post-Mao modernisation drive, also concedes that small units will remain for a long time to come.¹⁰³ Strangely enough, there was a phenomenal expansion in rural enterprises, industrial and other, from 1976 to 1980, with employment going up from 18 to 29 million. The rural industrial units in 1980 had a gross value of output of 52.4 billion yuans or 10.8 per cent of the national total for industry as a whole, the employment figure was 19.9 million or 6.5 per cent of the rural labour force.¹⁰⁴ For the early 1970s the latter percentage was estimated at 5.0 per cent only by Sigurdson.¹⁰⁵

The main characteristics of local level planning in China may be summarised thus. While the accent has been on labour-intensive and capital-saving methods of production in industry or agriculture, there has been a notable progress towards mechanisation without creating a labour surplus. The major part of the industrial inputs, including agricultural machinery, was locally manufactured, which enabled the communes and brigades to control the pace of modernisation with due regard to the local conditions.

Despite the large and increasing space left for local resource mobilisation after 1957 the Chinese do not seem to be encouraging the growth of 'cellular' economies or 'independent kingdoms' in the villages, towns and provinces. Strong central planning and control operate at different levels, to counteract partially, if not fully, trends towards greater inter-regional inequalities. An analysis of province-wise data for the 1950s shows that the richer provinces gave up a maximum of 80 per cent (Shanghai) of the revenues collected by them to the centre, while the poorer provinces received central subsidies up to 84 per cent (Tibet) of their revenues. Incomplete data for 1972 show the amount remitted by Shanghai was as high as 90 per cent. Data on provincial investments and on per capita social expenditure in different provinces, both for the period 1953-59, do not indicate a widening gap between regions.¹⁰⁶ However, no comprehensive data on tax-sharing between the centre and provinces or on provincial investments and incomes exist for the recent past,¹⁰⁷ hence no firm conclusion can be drawn. Nevertheless, the mere existence of a uniform wage scale in State-owned enterprises across the country suggests that inter-regional earnings per agriculturist could not have diverged greatly. In agricultural production the percentage increases from 1957 to 1974 or 1975 for the different regions were: northwest 115, north central 37, east 57 and southeast 57.¹⁰⁸ In agriculture the northwest was already ahead of other regions in 1957 and hence the gap has increased since then, but in industry the region in 1957 was lagging far behind several others.¹⁰⁹ Once again no firm inference can be drawn.

To sum up, whether from the point of growth or equity or resource utilisation, China offers many lessons for developing countries. But it would be naive to believe that her experience can be mechanically copied by others.

CONCLUSIONS

We shall first recapitulate our earlier discussion.

1 In terms of per capita NDP the USSR in 1928 was marginally, if at all, better off than China or India in the mid-1950s. In commodity production, and particularly in the structure of her industry, the Soviets were ahead of the two Asian countries.

2 Investment rates were high in the USSR in the 1930s only at constant 1928 prices, but quite moderate in comparison with developing countries today if one uses current prices or constant 1937 prices. In certain years real wages were below, and in other years above, the 1928 level. Peasant living standards except in famine years like 1932 or 1933 were generally superior to those in 1928. The terms of trade improved for the peasants.

3 After the 1950s Chinese investment rates went up and remain at a high level. But there is no evidence of a wage cut or a fall in peasants' consumption. On the whole, consumption levels improved though they are still quite low. The peasants' terms of trade gradually improved, but even at the end of the 1970s these were no better than in the 1930s.

4 Both in the USSR and in China the peasants' terms of trade would worsen if the differential labour productivities in industry and agriculture were reckoned with. On the other hand, the massive transfer (in absolute numbers, it being small in China if expressed in terms of proportion of total) of labour from villages to towns could hardly be achieved if the peasants enjoyed far better terms of trade than they actually did.

5 There are two main reasons why the Soviet pattern of the 1930s cannot be emulated by developing countries today: (i) the ratio of fixed capital per worker to per capita NMP or NDP is much higher in China or India in the recent past than for the USSR in her first phase, 1928-32, and (ii) fuel and other mineral resources are likely to provide a bottleneck if the first two were to opt for all-out industrialisation along Soviet lines.

6 Without giving up central control over the broad contours of development, China has acquired rich experience in decentralised planning. The most notable consequences have been the attainment of full employment through the promotion of labour-intensive methods of rural construction and agricultural production and simple technologies in rural industries. There is so far little evidence that greater autonomy has fostered regional disparities.

Our main argument is not that the Soviet type of centralised planning is inefficient or undesirable for present-day developing countries, but that it is unfeasible. China's experience in decentralised planning has special

relevance in this context. Of course, China's methods cannot be copied mechanically by others, but one can draw from them a number of lessons. Each country must find for itself an 'optimal combination' of central and local level planning, which may change at different stages of development.

There are also certain political and moral issues in assessing Soviet or Chinese industrialisation. Few would deny that peasants were forcibly collectivised in the USSR causing great sufferings, that there was a terrible famine in 1932-33, and that there were several million prison labourers in the late 1930s. In China, too, there was probably an element of coercion against the peasant masses engaged in rural construction works, at least during certain years. There is little evidence that all this was necessary for growth, quite often coercion was economically counterproductive.¹¹⁰ However, one may not enter into a detailed examination of these issues in the present context.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 A. Bergson, *Productivity and the Social System*, Harvard University Press, 1978, Table 5.5. The table gives three ratios, the geometric mean of the two at the prevailing ruble and dollar prices respectively is cited in the text.
- 2 A. Bergson, *The Real Income of Soviet Russia Since 1928*, Harvard University Press, Table 56. The table gives two growth rates using two base year prices, the geometric mean is cited in the text.
- 3 I. Kravis *et al.*, *World Product and Income*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, Table 8-4.
- 4 A. Eckstein, *The National Income of Communist China*, The Free Press, Glencoe, 1961, Table F-4.
- 5 Nai-Ruenn Chen, *Chinese Economic Statistics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1967, Tables 4.6 and 5.64, and *Almanac of China's Economy 1981* (henceforth *Almanac*), Modern Cultural Co., Hong Kong, 1982, pp. 960, 974 and 975, for China. *Economic Survey 1969-70*, Ministry of Finance, Delhi, 1970, Tables 1.9 and 1.14, and *Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy, 1950-51 to 1968-69*, Planning Commission, Delhi, 1969, Table 39, for India.
- 6 *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1958 godu* (henceforth *Narkhoz-1958*) Moscow, 1959, pp. 170, 272.
- 7 The Soviet (1928), Chinese (1957) and Indian (1960) figures in kg per year were foodgrains 236, 202 and 170, and meat 30, 6.2 and 1.4 respectively. The sources are: for USSR, Moshkov, a Soviet scholar cited by A. Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR*, Penguin Harmondsworth, 1969, p. 177, for China and India, as cited in note 5.
- 8 These are our computations in N.K. Chandra (unpublished, 1984), based on Soviet, Chinese and Indian official sources, supplemented in the first two cases by service sector net outputs estimated by Western scholars. The reference year for China is 1957. For India the reference year is 1955 for the NDP and 1961 for employment.
- 9 The figures given below are not comparable in respect of life expectancy and literacy.

	Birth rate	Death rate	Infant morta- lity	Life expect- ancy	Liter- acy rate	Urba- nisation rate
USSR(1926)	44.0	20.3	174	44*	57@	17.9
China(1957)	34.0	10.8	-	-	-	15.4
India(1951)	41.7	22.8	139	32	16	17.1

Notes * in European parts

@ in the age-group 9- 49 years

Sources *Narkhoz* various issues *Almanac* and *Demographic Yearbook 1966* United Nations New York

- 10 J Chapman, *Real Wages in Soviet Russia Since 1928*, Harvard University Press, 1963, Table 21, A.N. Malafeev *Istoriia tsenoobrazovaniia v SSSR 1917-1963* Moscow, 1964, Appendix Table 21, A. Vyas *Consumption in a Socialist Economy*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1978, Table 6.4, E. Zaleski, *Planification de la croissance et fluctuations economiques en URSS, tome 1 1918-1932*, SEDES Paris, 1962 Table 68 The lowest indices are those of Zaleski or Vyas, and the highest are from Malafeev
- 11 Chapman, Table 27
- 12 The number of dependents per worker fell from 2.46 in 1928 to 1.28 in 1940, *ibid*, p. 167
- 13 N.K. Chandra (unpublished)
- 14 A. Bergson, 'A Problem in Soviet Statistics' *Review of Economic Statistics*, November 1947, Table 1 Qualitative evidence were given by D. Granick, *Management of the Industrial Firm in the USSR*, Columbia University Press, 1954 pp. 84, 121 and 178-82, and J.S. Berliner, *Factory and Manager in the USSR*, Harvard University Press, 1957, pp. 170-78
- 15 Cited by Chapman p. 133
- 16 N.K. Chandra (unpublished)
- 17 Chapman, Table 21
- 18 N.K. Chandra (unpublished) There are no reliable estimates either of actual urban money wages in 1932, or of the level of 'bazaar' (free market) prices for the year as a whole, or of the proportion of wages spent on services hence the range is suggested for real wages
- 19 Nove, p. 250 The number rose from 10.8 million in 1928 to 22.6 million in 1932 *Narkhoz* (1958), p. 658
- 20 A.A. Barsov, *Balans stoimostnykh obmenov mezhdur gorodom i derevnei*, Moscow 1969 The significance of this work is discussed by J.R. Millar, 'Mass Collectivisation and the Contribution of Soviet Agriculture to the First Five Year Plan: A Review Article', *The Slavic Review*, December 1974, and M. Ellman, 'Did Agricultural Surplus Provide the Resources for the Increase in Investment in the USSR during the First Five-Year Plan?', *The Economic Journal*, December 1975
- 21 *Ibid*, Table 6
- 22 D. Hodgman, *Soviet Industrial Production*, Harvard University Press, 1954, pp. 153-54
- 23 N.K. Chandra (unpublished)
- 24 Bergson (1961), p. 118
- 25 *Ibid*, p. 325, and Chapman, Table 5

- 26 *Narkhoz* (1958) pp 152 and 622 The data on agriculture are based on N Nimitz, 'Farm Employment in the Soviet Union 1928-1963', in J.F. Karcz (ed.), *Soviet and East European Agriculture* University of California Press, 1967, Table 5
- 27 Chapman, Table 27 We have argued in N.K. Chandra (unpublished) that Bergson had underestimated the growth in consumption from 1928 to 1937, hence Chapman's figures should also be revised upwards as hers are taken from Bergson
- 28 N.K. Chandra (unpublished)
- 29 Ellman, Table 1
- 30 Our computation, recasting the data in Bergson (1961)
- 31 A.L. Vainshtein, *Narodnyi dokhod v Rossii i SSSR*, Moscow, 1969, Tables 6 and 8
- 32 *World Development Report 1981*, World Bank, Table 5 The 1979 gross investment rate (vis-a-vis the GDP) was 30 in Indonesia, 35 in South Korea, 38 in Yugoslavia and 33 in Japan, all figures being in percentages
- 33 N.M. Kaplan, 'Capital Formation and Allocation', in A. Bergson (ed.), *Soviet Economic Growth*, Row Peterson, 1953, p. 78
- 34 The comparison with Third World countries is made by T.G. Rawski, *Economic Growth and Employment in China*, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 5
- 35 *Almanac*, p. 961 Rawski, Table 1.1, quotes from Perkins to suggest an annual 4 per cent rise in per capita GDP from 1952 to 1978
- 36 N.K. Chandra (unpublished)
- 37 *Narkhoz* (1961), p. 27
- 38 *Almanac*, p. 963
- 39 Dong Fureng, 'Relationship between Accumulation and Consumption', in Xu Dixin et al., *China's Search for Economic Growth*, Beijing, 1982, Table 9
- 40 R.M. Field, 'Real Capital Formation in People's Republic of China 1952-72' and Appendix M, in A. Eckstein (ed.), *Quantitative Measures of China's Economic Output*, University of Michigan Press, 1980, p. 237
- 41 The incremental capital-output ratios, both variables measured at constant 1957 prices, were 2.13 in 1952-57, 4.99 in 1957-65, 3.75 in 1965-71 and 4.25 in 1971-75, according to Field, *ibid.*, p. 390 For the USSR from Bergson's GNP estimates and the figures on the capital stock by Moorsteen and Powell, both at constant 1937 prices, the ratios were 2.06 in 1928-37, 2.21 in 1938-40, 3.03 in 1950-61 R. Moorsteen and R.P. Powell, *The Soviet Capital Stock 1928-1962*, Irwin, 1966 Tables T-44 and T. 47 Both for China and the USSR only the gross fixed investments are considered. One may add that the ratio cannot be calculated directly from official sources in these countries
- 42 T.C. Liu and K.C. Yeh, *The Economy of the Chinese Mainland: National Income and Economic Development, 1933-1959*, Princeton University Press, 1965, pp. 29, 52
- 43 T.B. Wiens, 'Agricultural Statistics in the People's Republic of China', in A. Eckstein (ed.), Table 10
- 44 National Sample Survey, *Report*, No. 20, Delhi, 1960, pp. 21-22, 36-37 The data cited are the averages for rounds 4, 5 and 7 from 1952 to 1954
- 45 *Almanac*, pp. 974-75, 985
- 46 C. Howe, *Wage Patterns and Wage Policy in Modern China 1919-1972*, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 34
- 47 Ma Hong, *New Strategy for China's Economy* Beijing, 1983, pp. 16 and 22 Money wages in 1957-78 went up by only 1.1 per cent while the cost of living rose 14.3 per cent
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- 49 W. Klatt, 'The Staff of Life: Living Standards in China, 1977-81', *The China Quarterly*, March 1983

- 50 *Almanac*, p 986
- 51 *Ibid*
- 52 For a good summary of the issues until the mid-1970s see S.H Paine, 'Balanced Development Maoist Conception and Chinese Practice', *World Development*, April 1976
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- 54 Calculated from Liu and Yeh, Tables 36 and 37 Agricultural prices rose by 81 per cent while industrial prices increased by 257 per cent in 1933-52
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- 56 D.H Perkins, 'Constraints Influencing China's Agricultural Performance', in *China A Reassessment of the Economy*, Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Washington, 1975 p 363
- 57 C Li and T Chieh-yun, *Inside a People's Commune* Peking, 1974, p 101, and Han Suyin, *China in the Year 2001*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, p 119 Suyin adds that agricultural machinery, fertilisers and electricity were then supplied to peasants at 40 per cent below costs
- 58 Wensen p 72 In the early 1980s the exchange ratio between grain and fertiliser was less than 1.0 in China and greater than 2.0 in the international market, between wheat and kerosene the corresponding ratios were 0.4 and 1.5, etc
- 59 Perkins, p 364
- 60 *Almanac*, p 963
- 61 Hodgman, pp 72 and 219, Chen, pp 207, 212, and *Statistical Abstract, India, 1957-58*, Delhi, 1960
- 62 V Kasyanenko, *How Soviet Economy Won Technical Independence*, Moscow, 1966, Ch 3
- 63 M.R Dohan 'The Economic Origins of Soviet Autarky 1927/28-1934', *The Slavic Review*, September 1976
- 65 M Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development Since 1917*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948, p 253, and Gosplan, *Summary of the Fulfilment of the First Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR*, Moscow, 1933, p 187
- 66 *Narkhoz* (1958), p 658
- 67 Estimated from Moorsteen and Powell, Table B-1, and *Narkhoz* (1958), p 622 The latter gives investment figures at constant 1955 prices for the years 1918-58, it also indicates the figure for the last quarter of 1928 for which the current price official estimate is cited in Zaleski, Table 47 For the economy as a whole these were respectively 1.3 and 1.062 billion rubles implying a price increase of 22.4 per cent in 1928-55 Gross fixed capital stock in industry at the beginning of 1928 and at the end of 1932 were respectively 12.3 and 34.9 billion rubles at 1928 prices
- 68 *Narkhoz* (1958) p 152
- 69 Millar has argued that since the terms of trade improved for the peasants in 1928-32, there was no need for collectivisation. Similar views have been expressed by others as well. None has shown, however, how the kulak power could be curbed under a NEP-type regime, or that the socialist fabric could be maintained even with rising kulak power
- 70 Most of the data, unless otherwise stated, are taken from N.K Chandra 'North and South Korea A Study in Two Paradigms of Development', presented at a Delhi seminar in January 1984

- 71 In 1963 their share was 37 per cent in industry as a whole and 59 per cent in the consumer goods sector SJ Noumoff, 'The Struggle for Revolutionary Authority The Experience of the DPRK', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, March 1979
- 72 The United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook 1979-80*, New York, 1982
- 73 P Schran, 'On the Yenan Origins of Current Economic Policies', in D.H Perkins (ed) *China's Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*, Stanford University Press, 1975
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- 75 R Alley, *Travels in China 1966-1971*, Beijing, 1973, pp 310-11, 455, 458-59, 496 and 501-03, gives many examples
- 76 Dong Fureng, Table 9
- 77 See note 67 above The NMP estimate is from Ellman, Table 1 The population estimate is from Chandra (unpublished)
- 78 *Almanac*, pp 963-65 provides the data from which the calculations are made by us
- 79 The annual growth rate in industrial employment fell from 20.6 per cent in 1928-32, to 4.8 per cent in 1932-37 and 2.7 per cent in 1937-40 *Narkhoz* (1958), pp 658-59
- 80 *Almanac*, pp 960, 974-75, and *Narkhoz* (1977), p 66
- 81 NK Chandra 'Long-term Stagnation in the Indian Economy, 1900-1975', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number 1982, Tables 1 and 8 One may note that the ratio vis-a-vis per capita NMP would be somewhat higher
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- 85 BM Richman, *Industrial Society in Communist China*, Vintage Book, 1969, p 676
- 86 C Bettelheim, *Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organisation in China* Monthly Review Press, 1974, p 46
- 87 Richman, p 685, and Lardy, pp 15 and 146
- 88 Xue Muqiao, *China's Socialist Economy*, Beijing, 1981, p 223
- 89 Lardy, p 151
- 90 J Robinson *Economic Management in China*, Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, London, 1973, p 6
- 91 NR Lardy, 'Economic Planning in the People's Republic of China Central-Provincial Fiscal Relations', in *China A Reassessment of the Economy*, 1975, pp 100-01
- 92 Xia Zhen and Jian Chuan, 'Shanghai's Economy Past, Present and Future', in *Economic Readjustment and Reform*, Beijing Review Special Features Series, 1982, p 166
- 93 K Griffin and A Saith, *Growth and Equality in Rural China*, ILO, Geneva, 1981, p 137
- 94 TG Rawski, *Economic Growth and Employment in China*, Oxford University Press, 1979, pp 11-12, and Ishikawa (1982), pp 7-8
- 95 *Ibid*, Table 6
- 96 *Almanac*, pp 961, 963 Following the estimate for 1977 by Ishikawa (1982), it is presumed that in 1979 agriculture engaged 74 per cent of the national work force Ishikawa found a mere 11 per cent rise in labour productivity from 1957 to 1977, agricultural out-

- put rose sharply in the next two years by 18.4 per cent against a labour force increase of 2.5 per cent
- 97 Rawski (1979), Table 4-11, gave estimates at 30 and 71 per cent respectively, while Ishikawa (1982), Table 7, put it at 86 per cent from the data for one *hsien* only. We consider Rawski's lower figure more plausible, the higher one would imply an unacceptably high level of underemployment in 1957. As Rawski (p. 74) noted, in the 1930s idle man-days were no more than 40 a year per cultivator.
 - 98 Rawski (1979), pp. 94 and 97-98, and Tables 4.8 and 4.7
 - 99 Wiens, pp. 91-92
 - 100 The most comprehensive account so far is in J. Sigurdson, *Rural Industrialisation in China*, Harvard University Press, 1979.
 - 101 *Almanac*, p. 485
 - 102 Chen Bingfu, 'On Science, Technology and Economic Development', in O. Granstraand and J. Sigurdson (eds), *Technology and Industrial Policy in China and Europe*, Research Policy Institute, Lund, 1981, pp. 23-27.
 - 103 Ma Hong, p. 52
 - 104 Zeng Qizian, 'Employment Creation and Economic Development', in Xu Dixin *et al.*, pp. 162-63, Wensen, pp. 74-75, and *Almanac*, pp. 48, 484.
 - 105 Sigurdson, pp. 3-4
 - 106 Lardy (1979), Tables 3.3, 3.5, 3.13 and 4.3
 - 107 Griffin and Saith, p. 137
 - 108 Wiens, Table 16
 - 109 Lardy (1978), Table 3.4
 - 110 D. Swianiewicz, *Forced Labour and Economic Development: An Enquiry into the Experience of Soviet Industrialisation*, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 207, came to this conclusion after a painstaking investigation. The author himself was a victim. Ishikawa (1982), pp. 23-25, has discussed the problem of coercion in China.

LIU XINGWU & ALATAN

China's Policy Towards Her Minority Nationalities

THE CHINESE NATION

CHINA IS a unified multi-national country with 56 nationalities totalling 1,031,882,511 in population according to the 1982 census. The Han nationality, which came into being through the mixing of many ancient ethnic groups in history, is the most numerous, accounting for 93.3 per cent. They are found all over the country, but with concentration in the three big valleys of the Yellow river, the Yangtze river and the Pearl river, and in the northeastern plain area. The 55 minority nationalities, making up the remaining 6.7 per cent of the population, mainly live in border areas covering some 50-60 per cent of the total land area of China. The Zhuang nationality is the largest among them, numbering some 13 million, while the Hezhen with a population of 1,476 is the smallest. These minority nationalities intermingle with the Han and with each other to a very large extent and form small compact communities of different sizes. The distribution of these nationalities forms a very complicated pattern, for instance, even in some of the minority areas, such as Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Ningxia, etc., the Han nationality is a majority, accounting for more than 60-80 per cent of the population. The Hui nationality numbers about 7.2 million, of which only a little more than 1 million live in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the rest are found all over the country. About 1 million Tibetans out of a total of 3.8 million are found in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, the others live in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan, etc. The Uygur nationality is most extensively found in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, but large numbers of 11 other minority nationalities and the Han nationality live side by side with them.

This complicated distribution pattern of nationalities in China is the historical result of large-scale ethnic shifts due to needs in production and daily life, mutual exchanges, wars, natural calamities, regional separatist rule, etc. The pattern also reflects the close political, economic and cultural relationship between the Han nationality and the minority nationalities.

All nationalities in China have a long history, dating back to ancient times. Long before the third century BC, during the Chin dynasty (the word 'China' is believed to have evolved from 'Chin'), the country had already emerged as a united multi-ethnic entity. The various nationalities worked together in creating China's ancient culture, which made a great impact on the civilisations of the world.

Languages

Fifty-three of the Chinese minorities speak their own languages, while the Hui nationality and the Manchu nationality (who lost their own language gradually after becoming rulers of China under the Qing dynasty) speak the Han language. These languages belong to the family of Sino-Tibetan languages, Altaic languages, Austro-Asiatic languages, and Austronesian languages. The affiliation of the Jing language spoken by the Jing community is yet to be determined.

Before 1949 only 21 minority nationalities had scripts. Now a further 10 have been added to the list and 7 of the previously inadequate scripts have been revised and improved through the efforts of Chinese linguists.

Religious Beliefs

No unified religion has developed in China, nor is there so-called 'State religion'. Daoism, evolved in China, held sway over part of the Han nationality. Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manism, Nestorianism, Islam, Catholicism and Christianity were introduced to China during different historical periods with different degrees of influence. Buddhism was Sino-cised after it came to China and was patronised by the ruling class for a long time, therefore, it developed extensively.

Religion has been a very strong social institution among Chinese minority nationalities. Lamaism, an off-shoot of Buddhism, is prevalent among the Tibetans, the Mongols, the Tus, the Yugurs, etc. Hinayana Buddhism has its followers among the Dais, the Blangs, the Deangs and some of the Was. The Huis, the Uygurs, the Kazaks, the Girgiz, the Tatars, the Uzbeks, the Tajiks, the Dongxiangs, the Salas and the Baonans embrace Islamism. Christianity is found among the Yis, the Miaos and some of the minority nationalities in the western part of the Yunnan province. The Naxis have their own religion called 'Dongba religion'. The Russian nationality and a small fraction of the Ewenkis believe in the Orthodox Eastern Church. Strong primitive religious beliefs are found among the Drungs, the Nus, the Was, the Jingpos, the Gaoshans, the Orogens, etc.

Socio-Economic Formations

Until liberation in 1949, socio-economic formations among Chinese nationalities were very complicated and extremely imbalanced. Differences existed even within nationalities due to different geographical

locations. Generally speaking, the further they were from the centre, the more difficult was the problem of transport and communications, and therefore, they tended to stagnate in terms of development. The following types were found nationwide in 1949:

1 In the liberated areas under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the erstwhile semi-feudal and semi-colonial society was transformed into a new democratic society whose main features were a socialist State-owned economy, national capitalism and abolition of feudal relations in rural areas with distribution of land among the peasants on the principle of ownership by the cultivators.

2 In the coastal areas of the southeast, centred around big cities like Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou, etc., a capitalist economy had been developed to a certain extent by the imperialist powers, including many light and heavy industries, enterprises of a comprador nature and industries and businesses run by the national bourgeoisie.

3 A feudal landlord economy prevailed in the Han area, in most of the areas inhabited by the Mongols, the Yis, the Lis, etc., and in a small area of the Tibetans. Landlords and rich peasants, accounting for about 10 per cent of the rural population, possessed most of the land which were rented out to the peasants for cultivation. The middle peasants who accounted for 20 per cent, owned some land and were self-sufficient economically. The remaining 70 per cent of the rural population were landless or owned little land. They rented lands or lived on their hard labour, and remained on the lowest rung of society under heavy exploitation.

4 Feudal serfdom was found in most of the Tibetan areas and some of the areas of the Dai, Uygur, etc., with feudal lords and serfs forming the principal social classes. The Tibetan feudal lords in the theocracy, for instance, comprised of the feudal government, the monasteries and the aristocracy who possessed all the land and enormous wealth in terms of cattle and family slaves, although they formed only 5 per cent of the population. The serfs, attached to the feudal estates without any physical freedom, were allotted very small pieces of land. They devoted part or most of their time working for the lords, paying all kinds of taxes and levies.

5 The Yis, numbering about a million, living in the Greater and Lesser Liangshan mountains, were under the slavery system. The society was divided into four very rigid classes: Nohe (or the Black Yis), Quno, Anga and Gaxi. The Black Yis, who constituted 7 per cent of the population, were slave-owners possessing more than 70 per cent of land and cattle. They also exercised dominance in varying degrees over the other three classes. The Qunos, forming 50 per cent of the population, and subordinate to the Black Yis, owned small pieces of land and other means of production. They had to contribute unpaid labour every year besides being subject to other forms of exploitation. The Angas, who formed 33 per cent of the population, were owned physically by the slave-owning Black Yis and could be killed or sold at the will of the slave-owners. They had to spend

most of their time doing heavy labour for their owners. Some or most of their children were to become 'gaxi's of their owners. Ten per cent of the Yis belonged to the Gaxi class who were miserable low class slaves without any personal possessions whatsoever. They either worked on the land or in the homes of the slave-owners who had the absolute right to even kill them. A peculiar aspect of the Yi slavery system was the chain-ownership of slaves by which some slaves owned other slaves.

6. A primitive commune system was maintained in various degrees among the Drungs, the Nus, the Lisus, the Blangs, the Jinis, the Jingpos, the Was, the Lahus, etc., in the bordering areas and mountains of Yunnan, the Lobas in the Tibetan plateau and Inner Mongolia, and the Ewenkis and Oroqens in Heilongjiang province. The Drungs and some of the Ewenkis practised a family commune system in which land and forests were owned by family communes whose members worked together with their own tools and shared the produce. Some of the Was and Lisus were individual producers on a household basis, but besides private land they also had common land which they cultivated together. Social classes had appeared along with exploitation in the form of tenancy and money lending.

Political System

The bourgeois democratic revolution overthrew the monarchy in the hope of instituting a republican system, but aggression by imperialist countries and the ensuing reactionary rule representing the interests of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism made such a denouement an impossibility in China. The political structure marking Chinese minority nationalities was quite varied. Provincial and county systems were set up in Inner Mongolia, but the hereditary banner system also existed with feudal princes as rulers. Hereditary headmanship of various forms was prevalent among minority peoples in Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi and Qinghai provinces. Primitive democracy was practised in varying extent among those having a primitive commune system under which the aged, commanding respect from members, acted as leaders while major issues were decided by common consensus.

EVOLUTION OF THE POLICY

It would have been impossible for the Chinese Communist Party to lead a country with such national diversity to victory in the democratic and socialist revolution and in socialist construction without a correct policy towards national minorities. Based on proletarian internationalism and on the recognition of and respect for the roles played by all nationalities in creating and developing Chinese history and culture, the Chinese Communist Party adopts equality, unity and common progress as its basic general principles in solving China's national question. The policy towards national minorities was formulated combining this guiding principle with actual conditions in China, and has been constantly substan-

tiated and gradually improved upon over the long years of its implementation

The Chinese Communist Party was born in semi-colonial and semi-feudal China featured by many nationalities. China was invaded, oppressed and exploited by international imperialism which controlled and manipulated her politics and economy largely dependent on backward family agriculture and handicraft. Under the instigation of different imperialist powers, warlords and bureaucrats engaged themselves in incessant wars, and set up separate regimes which divided the nation. The people of all nationalities enjoyed no freedom or rights whatsoever and lived in misery and hardship. The task of the Chinese Communist Party in the social revolution was to lead them so as to overthrow the rule of imperialism and feudalism, and to establish a democratic republic. The task concerning the national question was twofold: externally to fight against imperialist oppression and exploitation to achieve freedom and emancipation of Chinese people of all nationalities, and internally to fight against oppression and exploitation of the small nationalities by the big ones, so that the minority nationalities could achieve freedom from their dual oppression. The national question is a component part of the overall social problem, and the task in this connection is naturally an inseparable part of the social revolution. The Chinese Communist Party has always treated this question as an important issue of the Chinese revolution. It stated 51 years ago that it was of decisive significance to bring minority nationalities under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Soviet government. The political report at the Twelfth Party Congress pointed out that the national question was a major issue affecting the destiny of the country.

In the history of the Chinese Communist Party, the first mention of the policy concerning the national question was made in the *Declaration of the Second National Congress*, a year after its founding. Clauses and stipulations concerning the national question appeared in the resolutions of party congresses and related conferences, in the Red Army proclamations, in the *Outline Constitution* and the *Constituent Act of the Chinese Soviet Republic*, in the *Resolution of the National Congress of the Chinese Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Soviet*, in the *Administrative Programme*, in the *Election Regulations* and *Marriage Regulations of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Bordering Region Government*, in the *Proclamation of the Chinese People's Liberation Army* and in the *Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference*. There have been a large number of special resolutions and proclamations concerning the question, such as the *Resolution on Minority Question Inside China* adopted by the First National Congress of the Chinese Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Soviet, *Proclamation of the Chinese Soviet Central Government to the People of Inner Mongolia*, *Proclamation to the Hui People*, the *Outline of the Huihui National Question*, the *Outline of the Mongolian National Question in the War of Resistance against Japan*, etc.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, all successive constitutions contained clear provisions concerning the national question. Specific stipulations in connection with minority nationalities are found in the *Electoral Law* and in the *Constituent Regulations of the Legislative and Government Bodies*. Special laws and regulations have been formulated in this connection, such as the *Administrative Programme of the People's Republic of China on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities*, the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities*, etc. There have been special decisions and directives from the central government, such as the *Agreement between the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Peaceful Liberation of Tibet*, the *Circular Order of the Government Administration Council on Tax Exemption and Relaxation of Inspection Standards on Slaughtering Cattle for Self-Consumption during the Three Major Festivals of the Islamic Peoples*, the *Plan for Trial Implementation to Train Minority Cadres*, *A Few Decisions on Minority Affairs*, *Directives Concerning the Establishment of Minority Xiang* (local administration government in charge of a few villages), *Provisional Regulations on the Management of Local Finance in Regional Autonomies for Minority Nationalities*, *Directives on Dealing with Appellations, Place Names, Tablets and Inscribed Boards of Discriminatory and Insulting Nature to Minority Nationalities*, *Decisions on Safeguarding Equal Rights by All Members of National Minorities Living Scattered*, etc. Party and government leaders including the late Mao Zedong, late Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping all have attached great importance to the national question and have personally handled issues concerning it while guiding formulation of party and government policies. They have also discussed the national question in their writings and speeches.

REGIONAL AUTONOMY FOR NATIONAL MINORITIES

To recognise minority nationalities politically and to ensure equal rights so that they can manage their own internal affairs and determine their own future, is the basis of all policies of the Chinese Communist Party directed at solving the national question. All other policies are formulated to guarantee this fundamental right. The central issue is, how best can minority nationalities exercise their right to manage their own affairs on the one hand, and on the other, to make sure that the overall policy is conducive to their development and prosperity.

During the initial years after the founding of the Chinese Communist Party and for a considerable period of time thereafter, national self-determination, federalism, autonomy, etc., were all part of the party's policy on minority nationalities. The *Outline Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic* passed by the First National Congress of the Chinese Soviet Republic on 7 November, 1931 'recognises the right to self-determination of all minority nationalities in China, to the extent of recognition of the right of all weak and small minority nationalities to secede from China to establish independent states'. It is clear that the party, for a considerable

period of time, envisaged the formula of self-determination and federalisation as the basis of the policy to solve the national question in China. This approach showed the influence of the Soviet experience, and at the same time was the product of historical circumstances. This Marxist-Leninist principle was put forward when international imperialists were talking glibly about national equality and national self-determination even while carrying on naked aggression against and oppression of weak and small nations, in an attempt to establish the colonial system all over the world. The Marxist-Leninist principle of national self-determination was advanced to encourage oppressed nations to cast off the yoke of oppression and exploitation, and to form alliances on the basis of genuine free will.

At that time the Chinese minority nationalities were under the two-fold oppression of international imperialism and internal chauvinism. Chinese politics and economy were monopolised by warlords, bureaucrats, and Guomindang reactionaries under imperialist manipulation. The party was of the opinion that, if all national minorities were kept together with the rest of the country without consideration of this fact, it would necessarily result in the extension of the territories ruled by warlords, and would block the path to development and progress of the minority nationalities and harm the rest of the nation. The only way to real democratic unity was to overthrow the rule of the warlords, unite the Han people, allow minority nationalities to form autonomous states with self-determination, and finally on this basis to unite all nationalities into a Chinese Federal Republic.

With the progress of the revolution and a deeper understanding of the situation of minority nationalities, regional autonomy was chosen as the pivot of Chinese policy to solve its national question. This shift represented the combination of the Marxist-Leninist 'universal general principle' (Lenin *On National Self-determination*) of regional autonomy to solve the national question in multi-national countries and of achieving the goal of establishing a democratic centralist country (centralism on the basis of democracy and democracy under centralised guidance) in the context of the conditions prevailing in China. The following characteristics of ethnic relations in China were seriously considered.

First, the Han people had ruled China for a very long time, and some minority nationalities had also been rulers of the Central Plains (middle and lower reaches of the Yellow river) during certain historical periods, resulting in an interlocking and intermingling pattern of ethnic distribution. Besides Tibet, few places in China are ethnically homogeneous.

Secondly, the rulers of the Han people had oppressed the minority people for a long time, and some minority nationalities had also oppressed the Han people during certain periods. After the invasion by imperialism, both the Han majority and minority nationalities were subjected to oppression. As China was semi-feudal and semi-colonial, colonisation of minority nationalities by the majority did not take place. On the contrary,

the common struggle against imperialism was a cohesive force which united all the nationalities

Thirdly, the party led the democratic revolution by encircling the cities from the rural areas. The revolution began in the countryside, and many minority peoples joined the revolutionary ranks in the struggle against imperialism and feudalism. Therefore, friendship developed among all nationalities. During the War of Resistance against Japan, many bases and liberated areas were established and armed forces organised among the minority peoples, many of them joined the Eighth Route Army (led by the Chinese Communist Party) and the People's Liberation Army, and large numbers of party members and cadres from the minority sections were trained. Thus cohesive and centripetal forces were further consolidated and developed.

Fourthly, considering the levels of development of the minority peoples, it would have been conducive to development to combine their strength with the majority peoples while it would have been harmful to divide this strength. If there had been secession, many minorities would have inevitably become appendages and colonial dependents of foreign powers, in which case people belonging to these minorities would not have been able to achieve freedom and liberation.

The policy of regional autonomy for minority nationalities was put to practice as early as the revolutionary war period. During the Long March, the Red Army helped the Tibetan and Yi people establish their own political power in certain areas. Later in the Shaanxi-Ningxia-Gansu Border Region, Hui autonomous country and autonomous areas (immediately south of the county), Mongol autonomous areas were set up. On 1 May, 1947, during the revolutionary civil war, the first autonomous area at the provincial level, the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region was proclaimed.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party, as the party in power, implemented the policy of regional autonomy in all areas where minority nationalities lived in concentration, and formalised it as a basic political system through the constitution and laws of regional autonomy.

Regional autonomy for minority nationalities in China comprises the following basic principles:

- (i) All minority autonomous areas are inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China,
- (ii) The Central People's Government and people's governments at all levels help autonomous areas exercise their right of autonomy,
- (iii) It should be a proper integration of national autonomy and regional autonomy. Due to the inter-woven pattern of distribution, it is impossible for minority nationalities to establish unified autonomies embracing all the areas of their residence in the country. A minority

nationality can only set up corresponding autonomous areas (region, prefecture, county or *Xiang*) in places where they live in compact communities. Even in these places, other nationalities are found. Therefore there should be a proper integration of national autonomy with regional autonomy,

(iv) It should reflect a proper combination of political and economic factors. Political factors reflect political rights, including the right of autonomy, as well as recognition of historical facts and present conditions. Economic factors should not be overlooked because the arrangement has to be conducive to economic development. A lesson in this respect was the establishment of the Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County in Guangxi solely on ethnic considerations. The autonomy was located in the mountains and soon became a liability in the matter of economic development.

Apart from minority nationalities living in concentration, minorities intermingling with one another can also exercise their right of regional autonomy through united regional autonomies. Autonomous areas are established at three different levels, comprising autonomous regions (at a provincial level), autonomous prefectures, and autonomous counties. A minority *Xiang* may also be set up to exercise the right of managing its own affairs. According to this set-up, a minority group can establish several autonomous areas where it is found to be living in concentration. Therefore the right of regional autonomy is guaranteed to minority peoples having different life-styles. Taking the Mongols as an instance, besides the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, Mongol autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties are established in Qinghai, Xinjiang, Gansu, Heilongjiang, and Jilin provinces. Apart from the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Tibetan autonomous prefectures are found in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan provinces.

Up to the end of 1986, altogether 5 autonomous regions, 31 autonomous prefectures and 96 autonomous counties had been set up all over the country.

Recognising the existence of minority nationalities is a prerequisite and basis for national equality and regional autonomy. Equal rights are out of the question if minority peoples are not even recognised. Guomindang reactionaries had refused to recognise the Chinese minority nationalities. They looked upon minority nationalities as major or minor sibling branches of the Han people (Chiang Kai-shek *Destiny of China*, 1943). In contrast, besides the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan nationalities, the Miao, Yao, Li, Uygur, Yi, Zhuang, Korean and other nationalities were from very early years listed in the documents of the Chinese Communist Party, which defined Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Guizhou, etc., as minority areas. In his article *Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*, written in December 1939, Mao Zedong pointed out that there were a few dozen minority nationalities in China.

Under the Han chauvinist policy of national oppression by warlords and Guomindang reactionaries, many minority peoples dared not admit their ethnic identity. After 1949, inspired by the party's policy, many minorities claimed ethnic status and names and requested formal recognition. Therefore, the Chinese government organised a large-scale survey for ethnic identification. As mentioned above, all nationalities in China live intermingled with one another. Mutual influences were very great among Chinese nationalities in terms of polity, economy, culture, language, customs, habits, etc. On the other hand, there were also many differences within each minority nationality, due to isolation and lack of communication. This was particularly so in the remote and mountain areas. Some of the minorities had two or more languages, which further complicated the matter. During the survey more than 400 names were reported, including different self-appellations, names given by other people, names of different branches, names of places of residence, and different transliterations in the Han language. Survey teams made up of ethnologists, ethno-historians, ethno-linguists and government functionaries conducted ethnic identification according to the four criteria of common territory, common economic life, common language and common psychological make-up, in the light of actual conditions. Based on historical documents, folklore as well as archaeological, linguistic and anthropological findings, 21 new minority nationalities were identified with approval from the State Council, bringing the total number of minority nationalities to



MINORITY CADRES

The training and employment of minority cadres is of key importance in order to realise national equality and to ensure that minority nationalities enjoy their right of autonomy. Cadres from among the minorities maintain close ties with their own people, and therefore play the role of a bridge between the party, the central government and various nationalities, and provide links of unity and friendship among all nationalities. The Chinese Communist Party has always attached great importance to the training of minority cadres. At the same time the sons and daughters of minority nationalities have also been enthusiastic to join the rank and file of the Chinese revolution and construction. Deng Enming, a deputy from the Shui nationality of Guizhou province, attended the founding conference of the Chinese Communist Party. Zhang Bojian of the Bai minority was among the first from minority nationalities to join the party in 1921. Among the trainees of the Institute for Peasant Movement, created in Guangzhou during the Great Revolution in China (1924-1927) by Mao Zedong, were Gobozeb, a Mongol, Ulanhu, the current Vice-President of the People's Republic of China, the late Dosonnian, Li Yuzhi, Jilantai and other members of the Mongol minority all joined the party during its initial years. Wei Baqun of the Zhuang was a hero in the famous Baise Uprising of Guangxi led by Deng Xiaoping and others. Of Yi origin, Luo Binghui, a former slave, became a general of the people's army and a pro-

letarian revolutionary fighter. He was one of the outstanding, high-ranking military officers of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

Minority nationalities have contributed greatly to the Chinese revolution. Mongols, Huis, Zhuangs, Miaos, Manchus, Koreans, Lis, etc., participated in the First Revolutionary Civil War (1925-1927), and party organisations were established among the Mongol, Hui and Zhuang communities. The Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1937) also witnessed the establishment of many revolutionary bases in minority areas, such as those in the Zhuang area of Guangxi, the Zuo Jiang and You Jiang areas of the Yao, the Li area in the Hainan island of Guangdong, the Miao and Tujia areas in Hunan and Hubei. The Red Army passed through the Miao, Dong, Bouyei, Yi, Tibetan, Qiang and Hui areas in 1935 and expanded its revolutionary influence. They helped organise minority armed forces and revolutionary governments in those areas and many minorities joined the Red Army.

During the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945), many people from the minority nationalities joined the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army (also under the leadership of the party), and many young people of minority origin went to Yanan, the sacred place of the Chinese revolution, to seek revolutionary truth. To train cadres from the minorities, the Institute for Minority Nationalities was set up in Yanan. Large numbers of youths from the minorities marched to the battle front. The United Anti-Japanese Army made up of Han, Manchu, Mongol, Korean, Hui, Daur, Ewenki and Oroqen people was active in the northeast, the Quongge Column formed by the Han, Li and Miao people was operational in Hainan island, a Hui cavalry corps was fighting in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Bordering Area, the Hui guerrilla detachment led by the well-known Hui hero Ma Benzhai played an important role in Bohai. Also among the fighting forces were the Mongol guerrillas in the Daqing mountain area of Inner Mongolia and the guerrilla column made up of Han and minorities in the Yunnan, Guangxi and Guizhou Bordering Area.

With the rapid development of the revolutionary situation and with daily expansion of the liberated areas during the Liberation War (1946-1949), more minorities joined the war efforts and the reconstruction of the liberated areas. Emancipation of minority nationalities followed the liberation of the whole country (except Taiwan), and they plunged themselves into the socialist revolution and socialist construction. By the time New China was founded, the number of minority cadres (excluding Liberation Army men and ordinary employees) had increased to more than 10,000.

For the past 30 and more years, the party and the Chinese government have taken various measures to train and promote large numbers of cadres from among minority nationalities. Today there are some 1.2 million such cadres. Most of the minority cadres work in their own areas, and many of

them have taken up leading posts in the organs and departments of the governments in the autonomous areas. The *Constitution* and the *Law on Regional Autonomy* stipulate that the chairman or vice-chairman of the standing committee of the people's congress, and the administrative head of an autonomous region, prefecture or county, shall be a citizen of the nationality exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned. Some minority cadres also work in the departments of their province, prefecture or county as ordinary functionaries or leaders. Now there are more than 20,000 minority cadres working in various departments under the party's Central Committee and the State Council in Beijing.

Besides managing their own affairs in their respective autonomous areas, deputies from minority nationalities also take part in the provincial as well as in the national people's congresses, and together with deputies of other nationalities, manage provincial and state affairs. In order to ensure representation of minority nationalities in all local and national people's congresses, the *Election Law* stipulates that each deputy from the minorities may represent a smaller population than deputies from the Han people. At least one deputy will participate in case of extremely small populations belonging to particular minority nationalities.

All previous national people's congresses were attended by minority nationalities. The Sixth National People's Congress held in 1983, had 405 deputies from all the 55 minority nationalities, making up 13.6 per cent of the total deputies, twice their proportion in the total national population. Minority nationalities also participated in all the previous Chinese people's political consultative conferences. Its Sixth National Committee includes 37 minority members, making up 9.07 per cent of the total. Several belonging to minority nationalities were elected vice-chairmen of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and vice-chairmen of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

UNITED FRONT

The united front is one of the 'three magic weapons' of the Chinese Communist Party to achieve victory in the new democratic revolution, socialist revolution and socialist construction (the other two being armed struggle and party building). To unite with the upper-class elements and to pay attention to their constructive role in managing the affairs concerning minority nationalities form an important component of the overall work of the united front. Upper-class elements refer to erstwhile high-ranking rulers and high-class intellectuals from minority nationalities. They could also refer to 'minority and religious upper-class elements' which include native headmen, princes and dukes, chiefs, aristocrats, living Buddhas, high Lamas, high ahungs, founders of religions, mullahs, and other influential personalities. On the one hand they have been exploiters and oppressors of the people, and therefore were opposed by the people. On the other they also suffered the oppression under the imperialists and

Guomindang reactionaries, and shared the religious beliefs, customs and habits of the labouring people, many of them have played a positive role in the development of culture and education in their respective communities. They have been influential in minority affairs, religious affairs, as well as in the anti-imperialist struggle and other patriotic endeavours. Some of them are public leaders of their community, who joined the national democratic united front before the founding of the People's Republic of China, advocate the leadership of the party and the constitution, and are willing to serve the country's socialist cause. Among them many participate in the people's political consultative conferences or are elected deputies of people's congresses at various levels. A few even take up leading posts in government organs. The brother of the Yi leader Shiao Yedan, who formed an alliance with Red Army Commander Liu Bocheng by 'smearing the blood of a sacrifice on the mouth' during the Long March, participated in the National Committee of the Fifth Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

MINORITY CULTURES

Respecting the cultures of the minority nationalities and helping in developing them is an important aspect of the principles of equality, unity and common progress adopted by the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government. National culture refers to both material culture and spiritual culture. The former includes feeding, clothing, housing and production tools, while the latter includes language, literature, sciences, arts, philosophy, religion, institutions, festivals and traditions. There is no question that backward production tools should be renovated and replaced by new and advanced ones as is the desire of the minority people and as is also the necessity of development. Protection is irrelevant here. As for feeding, clothing and housing, it is natural that they will improve following economic and cultural progress and with a better standard of living. However, it is very important to maintain and carry forward national styles and national characteristics. Except during such special periods as the 'Cultural Revolution', the party and the people's government not only have never interfered, but have actually encouraged the people to wholeheartedly adopt national styles and characteristics. The architectural arts of various nationalities have been protected and developed, and the party and government make special allocations to improve or rebuild houses for minorities living in simple and shabby dwellings. The costumes of the different nationalities are varied with distinctive styles and colours, and have been adopted by other nationalities as well. The women of the Han and other nationalities love wearing the Manchu cheongsam, a close-fitting woman's dress with a high neck and a slit skirt, it has been accepted as the Chinese national dress for women. Similarly, the instant boiled mutton, originating from the Mongols and the Huis, has become a delicacy loved by other nationalities. Local delicacies like Xinjiang mutton cubes roasted on a skewer (kebab), Inner Mongolian roasted mutton, Korean cold

noodles, etc., are popular in big cities like Beijing. These are indications of the respect shown to minority cultures. However, the following are more important

Guarantee of Equal Rights to Minority Peoples to Use and Develop Their Own Languages and Scripts

Language is an important component of national culture and is a manifestation of it. The party and the government have always been aware of this. The *Outline Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic* adopted by the First National Congress of the Chinese Soviet on 7 November, 1931, provided that the Soviet government should exercise more effort to develop minority cultures and minority languages. The *Resolution on Minority Question in China* passed by the Congress pointed out that the Soviet Republic must pay special attention to the development of productive forces in the under-developed minority republics and regional autonomies, establish schools, compile departments and printing presses for minority peoples entirely using their own languages and scripts, allow the use of minority languages and scripts in all government organs, absorb as many minority cadres as possible from the workers and peasants, and fight resolutely against the tendency of Han chauvinism. Subsequent documents and resolutions comprised stipulations concerning minority languages and scripts.

The founding of New China ensured better conditions which helped minority people in their efforts to use and develop their languages and scripts. During the early days of New China, a special institute was set up for minority languages which is now the Department of Minority Languages in the Institute of Nationality Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Here special training programmes and courses are organised for linguistic surveys. Between 1950 to 1956 preliminary linguistic surveys were conducted for more than ten minorities including the Zhuang, Bouyei, Shui, Miao, Yao, etc., living in the south, middle and northwestern provinces. After 1956, 7 teams of more than 700 people were organised to conduct linguistic surveys in 15 provinces and regions of 42 minority nationalities including large minorities as well as small minorities. The surveys produced a large amount of information on minority languages and scripts, including classification of languages and dialects, and provided a very favourable condition for helping create scripts for those minorities who did not have one. Altogether 10 new scripts were created and another 7 scripts were improved upon and perfected.

Both the *Constitution* and the *Law on Regional Autonomy* stipulate that 'In performing their functions, the organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas, in accordance with the autonomy regulations of the respective areas, employ the spoken and written language or language in common use in the locality', 'Citizens of all nationalities have the right to use the spoken and written languages of their own nationalities in court proceedings. The people's courts and people's procuratorates should provide translation of the court proceedings to anyone who is not

familiar with the spoken or written languages in common use in the locality', and 'In an area where people of a minority nationality live in a compact community or where a number of nationalities live together, hearings should be conducted in the language or languages in common use in the locality, indictments, judgements, notices, and other documents should be written, according to actual needs, in the language or languages in common use in the locality'. All autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties which have their own languages and scripts are required to follow these injunctions. For instance, Inner Mongolia uses both Mongolian and Han languages and scripts, Xinjiang uses Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian and Han languages and scripts, while Tibet uses both Tibetan and Han languages and scripts.

Efforts have been made to help develop publications of books, papers and journals in minority languages. At the national level, the Minority Publishing House and the Minority Compilation Department have been set up. The former uses Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur, Kazak and Korean languages to publish various kinds of books and translated versions of the organ of the Chinese Communist Party, *Red Flag*, while the latter uses the Zhuang and Yi languages, besides the above five languages, to translate and publish works from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and other proletarian revolutionaries including the current party leader Deng Xiaoping. It also undertakes to translate and publish important documents of the Party National Congress, National People's Congress, etc., various policies, laws, and decrees of the party and the government, and to translate important national meetings of the party and the government using the seven minority languages. For many years Radio Beijing and Xinhua News Agency have been transmitting programmes and issuing dispatches in Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur, Kazak and Korean languages.

All the five autonomous regions and other provinces with a high proportion of minority population, have their own publishing houses and some have their own minority language publishing houses. Some of the publishing houses produce books and publications in other minority languages. This kind of publishing has expanded very fast. Now more than 20 minority languages are used for publications all over the country. In 1949, 176 titles, 1,678,000 copies of books and 4 titles and 118,000 copies of journals were published, and in 1985, the corresponding figures were 2,759 titles, 36,290,000 copies of books and 109 titles and 10,350,000 copies of journals. During the same year, 57 newspapers with a circulation of 114,020,000 copies were produced in minority languages. Some autonomous regions, prefectures and even autonomous counties have established minority language radio programmes for broadcasting, some even have their own television programmes in the language in common use in the areas.

Development of Education

Education is of great significance for minority development and for the

improvement of national quality, and the party and the government attach special importance to the development of minority education. Since the founding of New China, education of minority nationalities has improved considerably. In 1951 there were only 943,000 primary school pupils from the minorities, which represented 2.2 per cent of the national total. In 1985 however, the number went up to 9,528,200, which was 7.1 per cent of the national total. Primary school teachers increased from 59,800 in 1953 to 397,800 in 1985.

Middle schools, technical schools and normal schools have also developed rapidly. Students from the minority nationalities at the above three kinds of schools increased from 45,507 in 1951 to 2,360,000 in 1985. The number of middle school teachers of minority origin went up from 2,708 in 1951 to 125,560 in 1985.

The number of university students belonging to minority nationalities was only 1,285 or 0.93 per cent of the national total in 1950. It went up to 94,095 or 5.29 per cent of the national total in 1985. Specialised faculty from minority nationalities increased from 623 or 1.85 per cent of the national total in 1953 to 12,775 or 3.71 per cent of the national total in 1985. Various autonomous areas have set up universities or specialised colleges. Apart from the five autonomous regions which have their own universities, some autonomous prefectures have also established schools of higher learning. The Mongolian, Uygur, Tibetan and Korean nationalities have produced textbooks in their own languages, and some subjects are taught in minority languages as well. Minority students can study in local universities, or go to other parts of the country for higher education. Likewise, scholars and professors from minority nationalities are not only found in local universities but also in universities elsewhere.

Education has stimulated the development of literature and art. A strong contingent of writers and artists from minority nationalities are coming to the fore. The journal *Minority Literature* is an important national publication. Many minority language films have been produced and many films have been dubbed into the minority languages. Special institutions have been set up to collect and collate minority classics and folk literature, and to protect minority cultural and historical relics. Minority dance and music have become popular all over the country.

Health and Medical Care

In old China, many minority areas had no medical care whatsoever, infectious diseases were widespread. The death rate was universally high, accompanied by a low birth rate and high infant mortality. For the realisation of national equality and national development, New China has taken up the development of health and medical care of minority nationalities as an important task. On the one hand traditional medicine of the minorities was explored, and on the other, large numbers of medical personnel were trained and sent to minority areas, many of whom have since settled down among the minority people. Hospitals, sanatoria, clinics, special treatment

stations, sanitation and anti-epidemic stations, maternity and child-care centres, medicines and chemical re-agents inspection stations, etc., have spread from the regional level to the prefectures, counties and even villages. By the end of 1985, institutions for health and medical care of all autonomous areas had increased from 361 with 3,310 beds in 1949 to 30,432 (10,061 hospitals) with 312,137 beds. The number of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, inspectors, and other medical workers had increased from 3,531 in 1949 to 423,733 (out of whom 105,616 were of minority origin). Among 182,503 doctors, 49,602 were from minority nationalities.

With improvement in health and medical care, diseases in minority areas have been reduced and many endemic and infectious diseases have been wiped out. The general health of the people has improved with extended life expectancy and a lower death rate.

Religious Freedom

The religious question is a complicated social issue with a protracted history and a populist context. Buddhism, Daoism and Islamism all have a long Chinese history. After the Opium War, Catholicism and Christianity developed considerably. Now there are a few dozen minority nationalities believing in Islamism, which has more than 10 million followers. Buddhism, Lamaism included, is popular among several minorities. Among some minorities nearly all the people believe in religion. Sometimes religion is interwoven with customs and habits, and in many cases, the question of religion is very much intertwined with the national question. The party and the government are aware that dealing with the question of religion in a balanced manner is crucial to national stability and national unity, to the development of international relations, to the prevention of infiltration of hostile external forces, and to the socialist construction of material as well as spiritual culture. Therefore the Chinese Communist Party emphasises in this matter 'special prudence', 'full earnest' and 'careful consideration'. To respect and protect religious freedom remains a long-term basic policy of the Chinese Communist Party, to be faithfully implemented until religion dies a natural death.

Freedom of religious beliefs means that a citizen is free to believe or not to believe in any religion, is free to choose any sect of religion, and is free to be religious or non-religious. Chinese communists are atheists, and adhere firmly to atheism. They will continue to unswervingly disseminate atheism, strengthen and popularise science education among the people, and imbue them with the scientific world outlook of dialectical materialism and historical materialism. However, the party is fully aware that it is not only futile but harmful to handle ideological issues, the issue of inner urgings including that of religious beliefs, with punitive means. The difference in ideological conviction between religious and non-religious followers is insignificant compared to the degree of coincidence of their fundamental political and economic interests expressed by their deep love for the motherland, strong support for the leadership of the

Communist Party and their enthusiasm to build China into a modern, powerful socialist country. The Chinese Communist Party has assumed as a basic task in the socialist period to unite the people of all nationalities, including both religious and non-religious people, to make concerted efforts to build China into a modern, powerful country. On the one hand, religious followers should not be discriminated against and their freedom of religious belief should be guaranteed, and on the other, the people's freedom not to believe in any religion should also be ensured. These are two sides of the same coin. The party and government point out emphatically that it is an infringement on the freedom of religious belief to force non-religious persons to believe in any religion and vice versa.

The essence of party and government policy advocating freedom of religious beliefs is to make the problem of religious beliefs an issue of free personal choice and a private affair. State power should not by any means be employed to force the following of any religion, and likewise, to prohibit the following of any religion. At the same time, no religion should interfere with the country's administration, judiciary, school and social education. Neither is it permitted to force anybody, especially children under 18, to embrace any religion, to become a monk or nun, or to study in a monastery. No religion should oppose the leadership of the Communist Party and the socialist system, or sabotage national integrity and the unity of the nationalities.

The policy guarantees all regular religious activities, and protection of religious places such as temples, churches, mosques, etc., and religious relics. At the same time it takes resolute measures against illegal, criminal and counter-revolutionary activities under cover of religion, and various superstitious activities which are beyond the scope of religion, and may jeopardise the interest of the State and endanger the life and property of the people. The religious feudal privileges and religious oppression and exploitation abolished during the Democratic Reform are not permitted to be reinstated.

To win over, unite and educate people of religious persuasions especially religious professionals, is a major task of the party and the government and is a prerequisite for the implementation of the party's policy on religion. There are thousands of religious professionals, including monks, nuns, lamas, Daoist priests and nuns, belonging to Catholicism and Christianity, Buddhism, Islamism, etc., who have national organisations and local branches. They are required by the party and the government to adhere to and implement the party's policy, observe the law, and advocate the socialist system. At the same time these categories deserve respect and attention. Efforts are taken to help them progress and to lead their lives according to their beliefs. They are encouraged to take part in productive labour, social service, religious research and socio-political activities at a national and international level, so that they too contribute effectively, according to their abilities, to the

socialist modernisation cause. Some religious professionals play a positive role in this respect.

Chinese religious circles can and should conduct mutual visits, intercourses and religious and academic exchanges with religious circles of other countries. However, in these exchanges, they must maintain independence, adhere to the principle of self-administration of their religious affairs, firmly resist the attempts at control by international religious forces, and reject interference by foreign churches and religious personages in their affairs. International and foreign religious organisations or persons are not permitted to do missionary work or distribute religious materials in China.

To sum up, Marxism opposes all theisms, but in political action Marxists can and must form a united front with patriotic religious adherents and work together for the cause of socialist modernisation. This united front is a component of the large-scale patriotic united front led by the Chinese Communist Party during the socialist period. To unite all religious followers with the non-religious masses and together to build a powerful socialist country with modern agriculture, industry, science, technology and defence is the starting point in the implementation of the policy of religious freedom, and in the handling of all religious affairs.

Customs and Habits

According to the *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, people of all nationalities have the freedom to preserve or reform their ways and customs. This is another important aspect of the principle of national equality.

Due to differences in historical processes, in natural environment, and in living conditions, all nationalities have their own customs and taboos in their material as well as cultural lives, such as in clothing, food, housing, marriage, funeral, festivals and etiquette. These have evolved through long historical development and are closely connected with the everyday lives of the people. They reflect the history, economy, culture and psychology of each nationality and therefore constitute one of the factors of national differences, tending to become sensitive issues in ethnic relations. The attitude towards the ways and customs of nationalities reflects the attitude towards the nationalities themselves, and thus has a bearing on national unity. That is why the party and government pay special attention to ensure that all nationalities respect each other's customs. Particular care is taken to educate the cadres of the Han nationality to respect the ways and customs of minority nationalities. While encouraging all nationalities to follow their traditions, the party and government also educate the people to create an awareness among them about how outmoded institutions and customs can harm their physical and mental well-being. For more than 30 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, great changes have taken place among the nationalities in this res-

pect Many outmoded customs and habits have been or are being discarded voluntarily by the people of various nationalities

Support has been given to all minority nationalities for their festival activities Apart from minorities living in their own areas, people of minority nationalities studying, working or living in Beijing also celebrate their traditional festivals under the care of and support from the party and government National festivals of minority nationalities are officially recognised as public holidays for the cadres of the minorities concerned

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To help minority nationalities develop their economy, get rid of their poverty and backwardness and achieve equal prosperity and development constitutes another important component of the basic policy of the Communist Party as regards the national question It is at the same time the end result of all policies towards minority nationalities Even before the founding of New China, efforts were undertaken to help minorities improve their economic life in the revolutionary base areas and in the liberated areas led by the Communist Party The founding of the People's Republic of China created even better conditions to help minorities in their economic construction

Democratic Reform

To emancipate people of all nationalities and their productive forces, to clear all obstacles and lay a sound foundation for economic development, the party and government led people of all nationalities in the task of carrying out various social reforms It began with the democratic reform in which feudal and slavery systems were abolished, enabling the people to do away with exploitation and oppression The democratic reform was followed by the socialist reform which eliminated private ownership of the means of production and established socialist public ownership

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, due to historical reasons, up till the initial period of the People's Republic of China, many minority nationalities or sections of them were still in stages of slavery, feudal serfdom, or a feudal landlord system, and very little of a capitalist economy had developed Some minority nationalities had retained, to a pronounced extent, remnants of the primitive commune system At the same time, due to unbalanced social development, the socio-economic structure was most complicated Not only were there differences among the minorities, but there were also differences within each nationality Ethnic relations and class relations were interwoven Hence prudent and steady steps were taken for social reforms in the minority areas, and for implementing and adopting different policies, according to the circumstances in different places

In places where the social development was similar to that of the Han areas, i.e., where the feudal landlord system prevailed, similar approaches

and steps were adopted. The masses were mobilised to carry out struggles against the landlords, thereby eliminating the feudal land system, depriving the landlord class of their political rights, and dividing the land among peasants. Soon afterwards, a cooperative movement was launched, organising peasants to take to collectivisation on the basis of public ownership of the means of production, mutual help and cooperation. Socialist transition was basically accomplished by 1956. Even in these areas, though, the special characteristics of minorities were given due consideration, and the method of struggle was comparatively mild. In accordance with the needs of the minority masses, appropriate allowances were made for traditional institutions such as reservation of communal and religious lands, cattle and horses for sacrifices, etc. In certain sparsely populated areas, it was common for minority households to rent out small pieces of land to immigrants. During the phase of land reform liberal policies were adopted in the division of land and in the determination of class status.

The approach of democratic reform by peaceful consultation was adopted in Tibetan, Dai and Han areas where feudal serfdom prevailed, in parts of Yi areas where slavery was dominant and in some minority agricultural areas with similar conditions such as Xinjiang region, the Hui region of Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia, and some areas in Yunnan. On the one hand, working people belonging to minority nationalities were mobilised to overthrow the system of exploitation, and on the other, to help minority and religious personages understand the necessity of reforms, and to try to win them over and accept the reforms. On the basis of consultation between the working people and upper-class persons in the community, the time schedule, steps, methods, etc., for the reforms were determined, in terms of which the government issued decrees for implementation. Representatives elected by the labouring people allocated land to landless slaves, serfs and peasants and those who did not have enough land. The privileges of feudal lords and slave-owners were abolished, serfs and slaves were emancipated and given political rights. There was no direct confrontation with those feudal lords and slave-owners who accepted the reforms, they were allowed to keep the necessary means of production and livelihood to support themselves with their own labour. Regarding influential leaders and sections of the upper-class who had made contributions to the revolution, care was taken to ensure that their living standard was not affected and that they were accorded political trust. Some were given honorary posts while others were given jobs. In some cases, the feudal lords and slave-owners not only refused the reforms, but also launched armed rebellions imperilling the lives and property of the people. Under such circumstances, the government was compelled to take a combined approach of political offensive (political campaign to disclose the class nature of the struggle) and armed suppression to implement these reforms smoothly.

To those minorities who still retained within their fold marked rem-

nants of primitive communes, it was decided to provide material and financial assistance such as production tools, relief funds, etc., to help them develop their economic and cultural undertakings, so as to gradually help them overcome their backwardness and thus make possible a direct transition to socialism

Small private production economies prevailed in pastoral areas and cattle constituted not only the means of production, but also the means of livelihood. It was also a natural economy in which people and cattle had to rely entirely upon nature. Such an economy was not only apt to succumb to factors of nature, but also was liable to be a victim of human depredations. No struggle was waged against those who owned livestock and pastures and hired herdsmen — their livestock was not confiscated or redistributed, and while their feudal privileges and feudal exploitation, were abolished, no open determination of class status was undertaken. Pastures became public property. Measures were taken to protect pastures and livestock, and to gradually accomplish socialist reform of the herd-owner economy by establishing joint State-private livestock management or by absorbing the big-owner economy into State-owned units or cooperatives.

Some reforms were carried out early and some late, according to actual conditions prevailing in various places. Time was allowed for the upper-class to come to terms with the reforms. In Tibet, social reform began in March 1959, only after the reactionary segment of the upper class started an armed rebellion. During the stage of suppression of the rebellion on a strong demand from the broad masses of the serfs, the means of production of the serf-owners and agents who participated in the rebellion were confiscated, and the debts they had forced upon the labouring people were abolished. A policy of peaceful consultation and redemption was carried out with respect to the serf-owners and their agents who did not take part in the rebellion. After the reform, a cooperative movement was initiated so as to ensure gradual transition to socialism. The Chinese government welcomes those who rebelled and ran away, including the Dalai Lama and other prominent figures, to come back if they agree to safeguard the integrity of the motherland and to support the leadership and the national policy of the Chinese Communist Party.

The social reforms described above have unleashed tremendous productive forces, and have given enormous impetus to the economic development of all nationalities.

Human and Material Resources Assistance

In the early years after liberation, relief funds and free production means were distributed to minority people experiencing specific difficulties, so as to help them resume and develop their production. Following the recovery and development of the whole national economy, the government started giving special preferential treatment to minority areas through allowance fund quotas, development supporting funds for underdeveloped areas, construction subsidy for border areas, special capital construction

allowance for border areas and areas where minorities live in compact communities, subsidies for minority areas, bank loans at low interest and discounts, pure cotton cloth and wadding cotton on credit, cash payments for labour, etc

It is worth mentioning here that these measures were undertaken in the spirit of internationalism and a 'spirit of paying back debts' as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai often told the cadres and the masses belonging to the majority Han people. It has been generally recognised that the minority people are underdeveloped because historically they were long oppressed and exploited by Han feudal rulers and that now it was time for the Han people to help their class brothers from among the minority nationalities. Therefore the Han people did not have any misgivings about this preferential treatment of minority nationalities.

The experience of developed countries in rendering assistance to 'native people' or 'aboriginals' have shown that material help alone is not enough for their progress. Under welfare-oriented programmes in these countries where the system of payment of regular cheques for the loss of their land prevails, minority people might have gained materially for the time being but in the long run, because of their dependence on the State, they find themselves unable to live as equals among other nationalities. Therefore emphasis is placed on helping the minority peoples stand on their own feet without relying on the State for everything. The most important thing is to make them aware of their own strength and capability to forge ahead, and to help them build up self-confidence, which is the life-line of their ethnic identity.

As a result of the assistance given by the State and from other areas, capital investment for State-owned units in minority autonomous areas increased from 560,000,000 yuan during 1950-52, to 11,469,570,000 yuan in 1985. Total capital investment for State-owned units in minority autonomous areas during the whole period amounted to 103,583,260,000 yuan.

The State also pays attention to the integration of the advanced technology and rich human resources from the developed Han areas with the rich natural resources of the minority areas. Many Han technicians are sent to assist construction in minority areas. The State takes measures to give special consideration to local interests when establishing industries, and also assists local industries to develop their production.

New Starting Point

Since 1979, major adjustments have been made to development policies. With the socialist modernisation drive, reform of the economic structure, 'opening to the world' and activation of the economy form part of the development policy in minority areas also. The party and the government are aware that greater efforts have to be made in these areas. During the past few years, in a few cases, the disparity between the minority areas and the rest of the country has widened, and this has caused deep concern to

the party and the government. Economists, anthropologists, and development planners are working hard to tackle this problem. The government has taken special measures again in terms of a wider liberal policy, such as reduction or exemption of various State taxes. But more important, efforts are being made to identify the proper starting point of economic development, to mobilise fully the strengths of the minorities and the advantages of various minority areas, mainly in such spheres as supply of natural resources, special skills of the local people, etc.

During the past thirty odd years, economic development in minority areas has been rapid, and profound changes have taken place, as the data below shows. Compared with 1949, the total value of industrial and agricultural output increased from 3 660 million yuan to 80,096 million yuan in 1985, an increase of nearly 20 times. Out of this, the value of industrial output grew from 540 million to 43,272 million, a growth by 79 times. The number of draught animals including oxen, horses, mules and camels, increased from 16,460,000 to 47,487,900, and the number of sheep and goats grew from 16,660,000 to 97,571,200. Transport and communications were improved with railways extended from 3,511 km to 12,495 km, highways from 11,400 km to 254,088 km, and postal service routes from 131,300 km to 903,987 km, between 1952 and 1985. The retail sales of social commodities increased from 980 million yuan in 1949 to 41,156.5 million yuan in 1985. Previously there were only some obsolete handicraft workshops, and modern industry was nearly non-existent. Many places had rich resources, but they produced no coal or iron and steel. As manufacture was not developed, many articles for daily life and implements for production were imported from other areas. Now many industries have been established and many new cities and townships have sprung up. Total cast iron production in the autonomous areas was increased from 9,000 tons in 1952 to 2,581,200 tons in 1985, the output of steel rose from 103,000 tons in 1962 to 2,324,500 tons in 1985, of raw coal from 1,780,000 tons in 1952 to 88,912,000 tons in 1985, of crude oil from 52,000 tons to 8,048,600 tons, and of power generation from 81,000,000 kwh in 1952 to 38,910,110,000 kwh in 1985.

In spite of these impressive figures, party and government leaders have not allowed themselves to be complacent. Most people in China are conscious of the fact that China is a developing country with a backward economy, especially in minority areas. The socialist modernisation drive calls for unswerving and persevering hard work. We are sure that under the party's leadership and with concerted efforts by all nationalities, common progress and prosperity will be achieved.

G P DESHPANDE

A 'Candidate Superpower' among the 'Filthy Swines'? Emergence of China in World Politics

AMONG THE Asian states China must be the only one whose foreign policy is taken seriously all over the world. In April or May 1987 an official of the Japanese Foreign Ministry was brave enough to suggest that Deng Xiaoping had no grip over international affairs. Soon after that statement the official lost his job. In the 1970s Helmut Schmidt nearly cancelled his visit to Beijing because his itinerary did not include an audience with Mao Zedong, whereas the leader of the opposition Christian Democratic Party, Helmut Kohl (the present Chancellor), had not only preceded him in being invited to China but had also been privileged with an audience with the old man of China. Schmidt naturally objected to this discrimination among barbarians. The German objected, did so successfully and won an audience with Mao Zedong. No other coloured and colonised people has been so assiduously cultivated as the Chinese have been. History has turned full circle.

It would be churlish to dismiss all this as due to China's opportunistic, reneging political behaviour and its consequences. There have been many renegades earlier in history. There has never been a scarcity of 'opportunists' in the world. From Chun Dwi Huan of South Korea to Marcos of the Philippines there have been any number of 'outposts' of American foreign and defence policies. However, none of these countries has been visited by a Western statesman in a spirit of visiting a centre of civilisation. Between Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping they have put at least one Asian state on the 'political' map of the world, signifying some setback to the Western dominance over Asia.

To be sure, whether in China or in Asia, none of us is anywhere near the end of that phase. The rise of China therefore is no more than a symbolic phenomenon and has to be seen as such, that is, without the slightest romanticism. The Chinese revolution and the personality and thought of Mao Zedong have a quality that encourages such romanticism. There have been writings on China which indulged in such revolutionary romanticism. These works gave us some insights into Chinese life, but on the

whole were not very useful in our understanding of China as a power.¹ It is important to see China as a power, its rise and its consolidation. The leadership changes and the ideological struggles in China are important and interesting. They should be studied with as much care and attention as possible. Yet such a study cannot replace a study of China's emergence as a power. The process of acquisition and exercise of power in world politics cannot be entirely independent of the domestic economic system or ideological perspective. Nor does that process make the issues of the economic system and ideological positions entirely irrelevant. In the final analysis they matter. (Deng Xiaoping and his successors are going to realise that truth unless, of course, their notion of truth itself undergoes a change.) But in the short run one has to recognise the relative autonomy of the process. In what follows an attempt has been made to trace that process, more particularly its recent history.

I

One feature of this process, usually identified as the most dominant feature, has been the dramatic changes that have characterised Chinese foreign policy. From being an ally of the Soviet Union and a firm member of the socialist camp, China moved to the position of arch enemy of the former. This movement has characterised the history of China's foreign policy and continues to dominate all thinking on it. The central question of China's foreign policy since the mid-sixties has been the distance between China and the Soviet Union. Towards the end of the sixties, the two countries were fairly close to war on the Ussuri river.² There was talk of a Sino-Soviet war -and of a pre-emptive Soviet strike on Chinese nuclear establishments.³

There seems little doubt that Mao Zedong and the Chinese leadership as a whole were never particularly 'internationalist' in a way that communists are supposed to be. It is possible to argue that the Chinese leadership was and has always been quite serious about socialism in their country. They have not found the 'international' implications of being socialist very interesting. It would be wrong to argue, as Peter Van Ness seems to do, that the government of the People's Republic of China extended and provided greater material and rhetorical support to revolutionary movements in countries whose governments refused to recognise it or voted against Beijing's admission to the UN or maintained close military and political ties with the United States.⁴ At the same time, it is true that considerations of national power and security have played their part in China's declarations and rendering of actual support and assistance. In that sense, the Chinese *weltanschauung* has been intensely nationalist. One might even say that it has been *civilisational* rather than nationalist. In his recent talks with visiting Japanese cabinet ministers, Deng made this quite explicit. Among other things, the talks centred round a Buddhist monastery in Kyoto, the ownership of which had been handed over by the Japanese court to the Taiwan regime. Reading the account, one got the

impression that the eldest brother in the family, in truly Confucian spirit, was advising his younger brothers how to behave. Deng said that what had happened was not good for 'our' relations.⁵ I think our understanding of China's international behaviour would be less than adequate if we ignore the fact that China is a civilisation-state.

It would be equally erroneous to look at China's international behaviour in terms of the 'middle-kingdom' syndrome. What analyses of the later kind do is to ignore the rupture with history that the 1949 revolution in China constituted. Had it not been for that rupture, it would have been impossible for the Chinese leadership to move from a decadent and static notion of the middle-kingdom to the concept of a dynamic partner in international politics, with China emerging as an active participant in the politics of nation-states all over the world for the first time in history.

II

As a young socialist State surrounded by 'US imperialism and its running dogs', China had to lean to the Soviet side of the world divide in order to survive. Mao Zedong announced this strategy well before the communists came to power in China.⁶ The leaning to one side involved large-scale military cooperation with the Soviet Union and the East European bloc. The Soviet Union's contribution to China's First Five-Year Plan and early industrialisation is too well-known to need any elaboration here. They granted China about \$ 1.5 billion in loans, credits and outright grants. The Soviet assistance was described by a US Congress-sponsored study as 'the most comprehensive technology transfer in modern history'.⁷

The Sino-Soviet goodwill, however, did not last long. By the end of the fifties the alliance was in ruins. Stalin has been blamed for this by many. Had it not been for the hard bargains he struck with the Chinese soon after the revolution, so the argument goes, the Sino-Soviet relationship would not have deteriorated so soon after his death. Professor Harry Harding has summarised the Stalinist and post-Stalinist provocations thus:

In exchange for the military alliance of 1950, Stalin demanded, and received, continued privileges in China, including the formation of four joint-stock companies and the retention of Soviet port facilities and naval bases in Dairen and Port Arthur. During the First Five-Year Plan, the Chinese complained, the Soviet Union insisted that Peking pay for all the economic and military assistance it received, interfered with China's economic planning.⁸

The Chinese did voice all these complaints to any number of visitors to China in the sixties and the seventies. There seems little reason to doubt the main thrust of these complaints. They cannot be dismissed as a jaundiced view of the anti-Soviet clique which came to power during these decades. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that Soviet 'misbehaviour' may not have been the primary cause of the split. National issues and power goals caused the real split. During the Taiwan Straits crisis of 1958,

Soviet support was late in coming. When the Guomindang forces began shelling the mainland and war clouds gathered in the East China sea, Khrushchev took longer than usual to come out with a statement of unequivocal support to China. The crisis finally blew over, but it became clear to China that the Soviet Union was not very keen on a military adventure in East Asia. What broke the camel's back was the Soviet attitude towards the Chinese nuclear device. Contrary to what Professor Harding and other experts believe, the Soviet Union was *not* 'generous to China' particularly in its willingness to assist the PRC in developing nuclear weapons'.⁹ The 1957 agreement between the two countries did not grant China totally independent control over its nuclear device. These two developments put China on to the track of near-blind anti-Sovietism.

In our age and times, when theories of exterminism are popular, China's insistence on an independent nuclear weapon must seem totally misplaced. Why did they need it when the Soviets were willing to extend a nuclear umbrella over China? The answer is that for the Chinese leadership, and here Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping have fewer differences than anywhere else, the nuclear weapon is a *political* weapon. A country of China's size, resources and perspective does not need it for use. This is the reason why China was the first state to give a no first use guarantee. It needs it to make the political point that a nuclear weapons-free world is feasible only if nuclear disarmament begins from the top. Further, the proliferation or threat of nuclear power at lower levels of the international power pyramid do not necessarily make the world more unsafe. In fact, a small nuclear club will try and keep its monopoly alive. Unless some better way of forcing the Americans to denuclearise is discovered, states like China have no choice but to acquire nuclear weapons or face the consequences.

In any event, whether or not Mao, Zhou Enlai or Deng Xiaoping were right in their search for an independent nuclear deterrent, there is little doubt that this issue more than anything else led to the parting of ways between China and the Soviet Union. Nuclear power is absolute power. The Sino-Soviet differences demonstrated that power divides and absolute power divides absolutely.

III

The critique of the 'superpowers' was, however, long in coming. Strangely, a pure 'power' perspective led to a pure 'ideological' perspective in the sixties. Between 1960 and 1962 the Chinese Communist Party published nine open letters addressed to the Soviet party in response to a letter from the latter. These were first published as separate pamphlets. They referred to such diverse subjects as 'The Question of Stalin', 'Is Yugoslavia a Socialist Country', 'On War and Peace', and so on. But in the main they constituted a sustained critique of Soviet revisionism. Mao and his followers are quite often taken to be typical examples of Chinese xenophobia and nativism.

which culminated in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. But the polemics conducted by the CPC against the CPSU position is in an unmistakably Marxist tradition. There may be differences about the rectitude of the positions taken by the CPC in the 1961-63 polemics. There can, however, be little doubt that the world of discourse as it comes through to us in these pamphlets and also later in the early years of the Cultural Revolution is Marxist.

The ideological zeal continued for a while till the Soviet troops moved into Czechoslovakia in 1968. It was then that Liu Shaoqi was finally named as China's Khrushchev and the Soviet Union branded as 'social-imperialist'. This angry denunciation followed the recognition that, as Zhou Enlai put it in his speech on 2 September, 1968

Since the US imperialism has recognised Czechoslovakia and the rest of Eastern Europe as within the sphere of influence of Soviet revisionism, the condition in return is naturally that Soviet revisionism recognises the Middle East, South Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia as within the sphere of influence of US imperialism.¹⁰

This speech of Zhou Enlai is in many ways an important document of China's foreign policy. Like the 'lean to one side' doctrine of Mao Zedong referred to above, it puts in so many words China's understanding of the world distribution of power and defines China's relationship, clearly of antagonism, to it. It thus has doctrinal value. Zhou Enlai was an architect of China's foreign policy who equalled Mao in importance. Earlier he was the enunciator of doctrinal shifts in the country's foreign policy at least in so far as it related to the Third World. The speech he made at the Afro-Asian Nations Conference in Bandung in 1955 and his listing of eight points relating to foreign aid in Dar Es-Salaam, Tanzania in December of 1963 are the two major proclamations he made. The September 1968 speech marked yet another shift. He introduced in apparently non-doctrinal terms the idea that the time to take the Soviet Union seriously as a socialist State was finally and irrevocably over. China's break with the Soviet Union was complete. The tenuous ideological bond between them had been snapped for good. Hereafter they could be enemies or friends. But they could not be fraternal members of a socialist camp.

The idea was taken up by Mao Zedong in his famous thesis of 'Three Worlds', which he proclaimed in February 1974. It was echoed two months later by Deng Xiaoping when he addressed the United Nations special session as the head of the delegation.¹¹ Flowing from Zhou Enlai's formulations and Mao Zedong's theorisation, the world looked different from Beijing now. In fact, Beijing saw three in place of one. The first world was made of 'filthy swines' of the two superpowers.¹² The second world was made up of the advanced states of Western and Eastern Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The third world was made up of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. For some reason, the Chinese persuaded themselves to believe at least for a time that of the two super-

powers the United States was a retreating power and the Soviet Union an advancing one. It is doubtful if they would subscribe to such a view today. In fact, before this comparative assessment of the two superpowers by China got general currency, they quietly dropped it. Here one must mention an opinion, articulated by a visiting Chinese scholar in the United States, that the latter 'was no longer an active imperialist power but had fallen, like Britain and France before it, into the ranks of the second world'.¹³ This, however, is an extreme view and even the 'Gang of Four' would not have taken such an unrealistic view of American power. One must grant that there is a degree of power-based realism in Beijing and it is no accident that this formulation of 'advancing' and 'retreating' superpowers was abandoned before long.

To begin with, the Chinese appear to have worked on the assumption that there was a contradiction, one might even say, an antagonistic contradiction, between the superpowers on the one hand and the second and third worlds on the other. As the years went by the Chinese seem to have abandoned the idea. As late as 1979, Deng Xiaoping was pleading for a strong anti-Soviet partnership among China, the US, Japan, and Western Europe, this was just before his visit to the United States. The significance of this stance does not lie in its anti-Sovietism, which was hardly new in 1979. What it signifies is rather that the Chinese have now abandoned even the 'Three Worlds' theory. In his speech at the United Nations in 1974 which we have referred to above, Deng Xiaoping announced the death of the socialist camp. In 1978-79 he was preparing the international audience to the Chinese rejection of the idea of a differentiated world. What mattered now was power, security and defence. He introduced in China's foreign policy an element which had been absent hitherto. Deng Xiaoping is the first Chinese communist leader to talk of world politics in completely non-doctrinal terms. With Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai it was a different story. One may dispute their understanding and indeed there are many who do. But their world of discourse was not as non-doctrinal as Deng Xiaoping's seems to be. It is this aspect of Deng Xiaoping's policy which makes the Chinese media talk of 'an independent foreign policy'. The Chinese conflict with Vietnam over Kampuchea and Indochina in general, their opposition to Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, their silence over Poland since Jaruzelsky's proclamation of martial law there, etc., can be explained only in non-Marxist terms. In the course of three decades, that is between 1949 and 1979, China came a long way.

IV

With the eighties we come face to face with yet another change in China. Now one has to alter slightly what has been said above. The 'non-doctrinal' phase in China's foreign policy has not ended but it cannot be ruled out that it might. The programme for 'Four Modernisations' which Zhou Enlai had first outlined in 1975 led the Chinese — or so it would appear — to look for a technological solution to the problems of defence and security. The

experience of the modernisation programme and that of the cooperation that the advanced Western states are extending has not been particularly good. China has taken the initiative to 'simplify' procedures for overseas finance capital. There has been a new wave of sorts in China. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the 'socialist' character of the reforms taking place there. What seems increasingly clear, however, is that the near-autonomous role of technology and the wonders that it is supposed to do for Chinese power may in fact be distant dreams. China has been fondly described in a Rand Corporation study as a 'candidate superpower'.¹⁴ Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Americans will realise before long that the optimism with which Kissinger's and Nixon's pilgrimages to Beijing in 1971 and 1972 began was itself based on wrong calculations of Chinese power. 'The week that changed the world' was how Nixon described his week-long visit to China in 1972. Fifteen years later the world seems to be changing again, or maybe the change in 1972 itself was an optical illusion. Chinese rhetoric and the actualities of Chinese power are not necessarily related. The Americans are discovering that fast. Reagan has been relatively unenthusiastic about China. The Chinese in turn have started talking with the Soviets since 1982. The resumption of Sino-Soviet talks has, in my view, one important implication. China now lives basically in a *post-Afghanistan* world. The Chinese leadership would continue to make the usual noises, but less often and in a far less shrill manner. The problems now centre around the deployment of Soviet troops on the border and, of course, the future of Indochina. Although they have not yet seen it clearly, they are bound to see that Vietnam, being a post-revolutionary society, cannot be ordered around by the Soviet Union any more than the Chinese can be. China will have to sort out her problems with Vietnam on her own, strictly bilaterally, unless it is the case that the Heng Samrin regime in Pnom Penh collapses. Quite simply put, it is highly unlikely Kampuchea is in for a long agony.

Meanwhile, the Chinese will have to get as much of an assurance as possible from the Soviet Union on their security and borders. It does seem that they are moving in that direction. The illusion that they are a 'candidate superpower' or that the Soviet Union is a 'filthy swine' will have to be abandoned. There are indications that it is being done. The agreement between the Soviet Union and China on their riverine frontier made up of the Ussuri river in the extreme northeast is one clear indication that things are moving in a direction of more peaceful and friendly relations between the two countries. Gorbachev might well say, 'Better times are here again.'

What the Chinese foreign policy-makers have not yet reckoned with is the increasing conservatism in the Western world. Reagan and Margaret Thatcher would be interested in China as an anti-Soviet ploy. They nevertheless do not forget that it is a communist party-ruled State. This places severe limitations on a China-West understanding. I am not suggesting that this signals the end of China-US cooperation or that a phase

comparable to the 1950s in Sino-Soviet relations is to be expected. Nothing of the kind is likely to happen. China is going to discover that she is considered as a 'socialist State' by the West and, short of liquidating the Communist Party, she cannot do anything to disabuse them of that notion and of consequent policy implications. Before long, China is going to face that problem.

Domestically they have already faced that problem, albeit in different terms. Deng Xiaoping talked of some people in China for whom 'Marxism, Mao Zedong thought and the Communist Party have all disappeared'.¹⁵ The irony of Deng's statement lies in the fact that the West and Western scholars think that Deng Xiaoping is one of them. Slowly they are coming to terms with the reality that this is not the case. The more widespread this realisation, the less would be the Western interest in China. Capital is bound to dictate its terms. It is not my intention to suggest that Deng Xiaoping has reached the end of his experiment. One does not know. It is outside the scope of this paper to assess that. But one thing seems to be clear. The concessions that the Chinese political system has made over the last decade to foreign capital and to Western strategic needs and requirements have not brought as many dividends to China as Deng Xiaoping would have liked. The swines in the West have proved to be as filthy, if not filthier, as those in the East. I would not be surprised if some rethinking is in fact going on in China. If it is, we should get its first signs in the Communist Party Congress this autumn. It is then and in the couple of years thereafter that we shall get a clear idea of the new course in China's foreign policy. Let us wait and see.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 See for example Bob Avakian, *Mao Tsetung's Immortal Contributions*, RCP Publications Chicago (no date), or Han Suyin's writings of the Cultural Revolution years.
- 2 China and the Soviet Union had a serious clash on the Ussuri river in early 1969. The bone of contention between them at the time was an island within the river which the Chinese called Chen Bao and the Soviets called Damansky.
- 3 See Harrison E. Salisbury, *The Coming War between Russia and China*, London, 1969.
- 4 Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971.
- 5 For a report of this visit, see the *Financial Times*, London, June 22, 1987. See also my commentary in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, July 1987.
- 6 Mao Zedong, *The People's Democratic Dictatorship* in *Selected Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 411-25. The original line is 'You are leaning to one side?' Exactly.
- 7 Hans Heymann, Jr., 'Acquisition and Diffusion of Technology in China' in US 94th Congress, 1st Session, Joint Economic Committee, *China: A Reassessment of the Economy*, Washington DC, US Government Printing Office, 1975, p. 678.
- 8 Harry Harding, 'China's Changing Roles in the Contemporary World' in Harry Harding (ed.), *China's Foreign Relations in the 1980s*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984, p. 183.
- 9 Ibid.

- 10 These nine pamphlets were published separately by the Foreign Languages Press Beijing, between 1961 to 1963. Later they were published together in a book form.
- 11 See my *China's Cultural Revolution: A View from India*, Bombay 1971, p. 101.
- 12 For the text of the speech of Deng Xiaoping see *Beijing Review*, April 12, 1974. For an official endorsement and commentary on the Three Worlds theory after Mao's death see *Beijing Review*, November 4, 1977, pp. 10-41. The latter article is by far the longest elucidation of the Three Worlds theory emanating from the official Chinese press. Also cited by Professor Harding, 1984.
- 13 This was the epithet used by *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) on January 27, 1967, for the Soviet Union. But going by the Chinese logic it would extend to 'superpowers' generally. It was China's experience of the time that the Soviet Union was a filthy swine, but they would see as indeed they always did that according to North Korean perspective the status may properly belong to the United States.¹
- 14 This summary is by Professor Harry Harding, 1984, p. 193. He cites the source thus: 'Hua Di: Chinese Comprehensive Strategic Doctrine' in *The Role of Technology in meeting the defense challenges of the 1980s*, Stanford University, November 1981.
- 15 Jonathan Pollock, *China's Potential as World Power*, Santa Monica, CA, Rand Corporation, July 1980, pp. 65-24.
- 16 *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Beijing, 1984, p. 16.

MALINI BHATTACHARYA

Experiments in Socialist Practice : Some Impressions of the People's Republic of China

IT IS MY feeling that one generally gets a much more lucid impression of a new country by reading books than by paying a short visit. Particularly if the country is as vast as the People's Republic of China and if one has no access at all to the language. Within three or four months, the multitudinous images get blurred and, floundering in the empiricist miasma, one begins to wonder whether, in the structured impressions one missed more than one saw or heard.

I was in the People's Republic of China for a fortnight in September 1985 as a member of a team of Indian social scientists at the invitation of the Chinese Association of International Understanding. We visited Beijing, Xian, Shanghai and Guangzhou with a day's trip to the special economic zone of Shenzhen, from where one can get a glimpse of Kowloon. We had the opportunity of exchanging views with eminent intellectuals, academics, administrators and party functionaries in all these places, or rather, we mostly had them answering our eager enquiries regarding the recent changes in their country. Although changes in the economic policy provided the main thrust of our enquiries, we are also trying to explore its superstructural implications and this of course came to us not just through the discussions, but also from the intermediate sessions of sight-seeing and cultural activities, from our walks down the road, lunches and dinners, from our partial and linguistically problematic exposures to people we saw streaming around us in the streets, and above all from relaxed after-dinner talks with Comrade Lee and Comrade Chen, our guides for the entire trip who became our friends. Not trusting my memory, I managed to take some notes and keep a diary during my stay there, these are the tenuous experiential materials from which I am trying to reconstruct the Chinese view of some of the ideological and cultural tendencies which find prominence in the present phase of socialist construction in China. Reporting can seldom be without commentary, explicit or implicit, my comments too are embedded in my text, and, to use Pierre Macherey's terms, maybe it is

the 'gaps' and 'silences' within it which will prove to be of some interest to China-watchers

In the course of our discussions on the new economic policy, one term came up very frequently – development of the productive forces. The principal contradiction in the present situation was seen as that between advanced (socialist) production relations and insufficient development of the economy. The emphasis on increasing production was however coupled with another emphasis – increasing consumption. We want a socialism of plenty, said the Chinese comrades, not a socialism of poverty. We cannot afford to have our warehouses glutted with goods for which we cannot create a demand. We must have our people enjoying the good things of life. The value of products must be realised in consumption. It is only on the basis of material prosperity that a 'socialist spiritual civilisation' can be constructed.

This had an added theoretical implication. At least in the present context, within the structure of China's socialist economy, production must be commoditised. To vitalise buying and selling, a certain degree of managerial autonomy must be granted to productive and commercial enterprises, the State's control over buying and selling must be relaxed in certain specific, pre-planned areas even to the extent of inviting foreign capital and expertise. In understanding this standpoint of the Chinese comrades, the Indian point of view may turn out to be somewhat unhelpful. Both here and in Western capitalist countries, we have the bourgeois mass-media gleefully announcing that the Chinese are talking in terms of a market economy, ergo, they have taken the capitalist path. The Chinese argue that to include commodity production within socialist planned production does *not* mean the relegation of production to the anarchic forces of a capitalist market. It must be remembered that this is being argued by people living in a system where the basic means of production are collectively owned, where land, labour and infrastructural facilities like roads, railways and irrigation cannot be turned into commodities at all, where basic social securities for all are guaranteed by the State, and where the institutions do not permit capital accumulation. When you talk of using the autonomy of market forces for enhancing production and consumption from within such a system, the implication of the terms would be distinctive. A planned relaxation of control in limited areas is certainly radically different from a state of anarchy. Mandatory planning by the State, for instance, is now supplemented by guidance planning and a 'free market' is only a marginal phenomenon. The relative ratios can only change up to a certain extent, because the socialist system of ownership will still be in command. The internal mechanics of the institutions as they exist would ensure that the vitalisation of the economy through the market at the micro-level would be combined with planned intervention by the State into the market at the macro-level. With existing safeguards, the market could be used to implement the plan ultimately.

One should also recall here what has been frequently called the 'zig-zag path' of the Chinese Revolution, and which can be traced back to 1956-57. The shift made during the 'Big Leap Forward' was modified and the socialist transformation movement carried through up to a certain stage. Then from 1966-67 came the experiments — often painful — of the Cultural Revolution. The 'leftist' mistakes made in this period were again rectified, and a new phase of socialist construction with greater emphasis on autonomy of enterprise and modernisation set in. Even as I am writing today changes are in the offing following the recent student disturbances in Beijing. This time, the shift quite clearly is not a rejection of the policy itself but involves a more rigorous interpretation of it so that mistakes in implementation may be avoided. However, throughout the history of socialist China, even when there were actual shifts in policy, these never meant a complete dislocation of earlier achievements indicating an antagonistic contradiction between two phases. They rather meant putting a renewed emphasis on factors which have been underplayed, even neglected, in the preceding phase. So when today the Chinese comrades speak of opening up and of enlivening the domestic economy, this must be seen against the perspective of a system which has always had a great deal of flexibility.

In our discussions about the Cultural Revolution it seemed that its avowed goal, i.e., collectivisation of the economy, is not where the mistake is seen to lie. It lay rather in the means employed to reach this agreed goal, indiscriminating coercion and manipulation of the masses. The immense importance of superstructural changes within a socialist system is a lesson of the Cultural Revolution that has sunk deep, and precisely for this reason the reaction against the manipulative mode of action of the 'Gang of Four' is very strong. The neglect of education and acquired expertise for the sake of an incipient spontaneism is held to be mainly responsible for the present backwardness of the economy. This spontaneism had crushed the people's initiative instead of rousing it. The mistake is also diagnosed in over-precipitateness in liquidating the individual economy altogether. Apart from the stalling of large-scale production and lethargy in consumption, the greatest harm done is seen as the neglect of the education programme, leading to an actual dropping of literacy rates in the countryside. This had also meant a laxity in the quality of education.

Comrade Chen had been a Red Guard in his student days. The story of his disillusionment was possibly the story of many young people who had initially hailed the Cultural Revolution. They spent a few months in the countryside, came and occupied a school in Beijing, and subsequently idled away several months not knowing what to do. Chen was present at the famous Tien An Men Square incident. At that time a truck-driver friend of his, who refused to give the militia a lift to the trouble-spot, had confirmed his suspicion that resentment was growing among ordinary people. As long as it seemed that it was the united party leadership that was behind the Cultural Revolution, the people remained passive. Active

opposition grew after it was found that it was a minority within the leadership that was engineering the course of the movement

The personal 'scars' of the Cultural Revolution seem to be healing and people are now able to get a more comprehensive perspective to the turbulent period. The beautiful 77-year old woman, the vice-chairman of the Chinese Association for International Understanding, who hosted our welcome dinner, is a member of one of the left democratic parties which had assisted the communists in making the revolution. She had joined the Department of Political Science at Beijing University in the early thirties and been drawn actively into the revolution. She had been removed from the faculty and sent to the countryside. She lived with peasants who were kind to her, but for her these were years of enforced inactivity. A friend told us this story and when we asked her about it, her smile held no bitterness. That smile indicated that aberrations would happen when big changes took place and individual suffering could not be ruled out. What was important, however, was that the mistakes could be and were rectified, showing the flexibility of the system.

We have been told again and again that China remains a poor country even 38 years after the revolution, and we have tried to puzzle out what 'poverty' means in Chinese terms. Obviously here again Indian standards would be very unhelpful. Poverty arising out of disparities in distribution, present in such ugly proportions in India, is non-existent in socialist China. It is the responsibility of the State to provide work. Cent per cent employment was yet to be achieved and the fall in productive enterprise and neglect of education and training during the Cultural Revolution had itself created some unemployment. But while people are 'waiting for work' they are covered by a system of social security. Self-employment in the commercial and the services sectors is now seen as one of the practical solutions to the problem. The more comprehensive solution of course is increase of production itself on a large scale.

What came as a pleasant shock to us was in fact the general absence of disparities. The highest and lowest points in the wage structure were fairly close to each other, though it was on the verge of a revision at the time. 'Do you know', Comrade Chen had said supporting the coming revisions, 'that our comrade, the senior academic, gets paid now at the same rate as the waitresses at Wan Shou Lou guest house in Beijing?' Chen's point had been that even as economic incentive was being used in the sphere of productive and commercial enterprise, so too the wage structure must recognise efficiency and specialised skill. However, with parity in the basic wages and allowances, and with the cheap rate at which basic amenities like accommodation, rationed foodstuff, electricity and gas are available, it is unlikely that differentials in living standards would become too pronounced even with a revised, more flexible structure of wages. Of course, earning more would be an incentive to consuming more. And greater demand for consumable articles within the country would be an incentive to increase

production. This would also mean that with a basic standard of living guaranteed for all, the differentials in living standards *would* rise. Some people *would* consume more than others. But the important thing is that this would not be an incentive to capital accumulation beyond a very narrow limit because within the present system such capital cannot be used in any way.

At the moment, then, the Chinese comrades are not unduly worried about these differentials in consumption, about some people 'being allowed to get rich faster than others'. So long as one does not get richer by making others poorer, one's living standards would be directly related to one's contribution to the economy. Chinese society cannot yet provide 'to each according to his need', but it can provide 'to each according to his work'. Differentials must always have been there even in the days of 'everyone eating out of the big pot'. The new policy does not create them, it only acknowledges them as a reality, acknowledges that they cannot be removed by coercion, but by enhancing the general tone of the economy. The fact of some people getting rich quicker than others is seen as a temporary by-product of this.

Our visit to the YuZing school in Beijing gave us some idea of the gradations existing in a highly developed area. Beijing was turning cold in late September, and all the children in the primary section were sufficiently well-clad in colourful garments (there being no system of school uniform) and full of beans. We heard that admission tests were unknown and admission was on a neighbourhood basis. Tuition throughout school was free, and little or no money had to be paid for books and equipment of which we saw a great variety. The cartons of yoghurt with which the children served themselves during the recess were also free. What strikes us initially is this very real, basic equality available to the future citizens of socialist China. Against this background, the gradations that appear to the eye are also real, but comparatively minor. For instance, some garments are obviously more expensive than others. A few children seem to be less well looked-after than the others, a few, for instance, had pretty bad teeth. This however could not be a result of the new polity. Rather, it seems to be the remnant of the cultural habits of a time when the majority of parents could not afford proper health care for their children. One new feature we had earlier heard about was the 'key-school', a centre for fostering excellence, with a stricter admission policy. On asking we were told that a few such schools had indeed been recently set up on a purely experimental basis. It must be remembered that these schools were set up only after provision had been made for the enrolment of at least 93 per cent of children of the school-going age, including children from the most backward areas (statistics for 1983). It must also be remembered that this entire expenditure is borne by the State, and is not relegated to private institutions. Whatever our objections to having centres of excellence at the school-stage itself, we must certainly admit that key-schools in such a situation are far less likely

to become an excuse for the curtailment of State expenditure on general primary and secondary education, than in a country like ours

The notion of 'poverty' in the Chinese context then did not arise mainly out of disparities in distribution, even though gradations were there, but arose from backwardness in production and consumption. As Comrade Chen once told us, the government shops had ample stocks of consumables, but the demand was low. People sometimes did not even draw their full ration. In the big cities we visited, there were few obvious signs of this general backwardness. Rather, the new impetus given to consumption was evident in the brisk trade the shops seemed to be doing till evening (though hoardings advertising products were few and far between), in the varieties of dress one witnessed particularly outside Beijing, and in the way in which internal tourism appeared to flourish side by side with international tourism.

This last was one of our most pleasant experiences. Whether at Mao's Mausoleum, or at the Great Wall, or at the Ming tombs, along with foreign tourists one always found a substantial mixture of peasants, workers, professional people from the most distant parts of China visiting these spots embodying different phases of their own history. At Xian, secondary school children were on duty at the archaeological sites, seeing that the place was not littered up, and indeed, in spite of the great pressure of crowds, they had very little to do. Perfect civic sense seemed to be the order of the day. At Xian, going out for an after-dinner stroll, we found the streets teeming with people fairly late at night. Outdoor cooking of the most sumptuous kind was going on (pork on one side of the road and no-pork on the other), and working people on their way home, sat on the roadside benches, eating their fill. At Guangzhou, we visited the open market where individual buying and selling goes on. It had been closed down during the Cultural Revolution, but brisk trade has resumed now once again. The population in Guangzhou was so large that government shops found it difficult to meet the demand. Prices were higher at the open market, but one came here for country-fresh vegetables and exotic stuff from gold fish and caged birds to dried snakes. The revolving restaurant on top of The White Swan, a seven-star hotel fast repaying its dollar debts by doing brisk business with foreign tourists, kept its prices at a level that the Chinese people could afford, and the place was filled with Chinese sight-seers with children on a Sunday afternoon. Poverty obviously had been beaten back to the relatively underdeveloped recesses of the country about which we only heard.

Yet one could get a faint glimpse of the kind of problems the Chinese comrades were talking about. In ensuring a better standard of living, for instance, solution of the housing problem was essential. The new planning was most evident in Beijing. The main roads were very broad, with separate lanes for cyclists on the sides and built-in areas did not interfere with roads, slums were totally absent, workers' quarters were generally situated around the city centre. The problem of space was being solved by building upwards and the skyline of Beijing was being changed by multi-storied

houses Both in Shanghai and Guangzhou, however, in some of the heavily built-in areas, the impression of people living cheek by jowl was still there As in all cities where indoor life is somewhat cramped, in Shanghai and Guangzhou people seemed to spend more time outdoors than in Beijing. Washing was being hung out of windows on bamboo poles Occasionally one could see women on a free morning, washing their hair in a tub outdoors The only place we saw people still living in shacks was in Guangzhou Obviously, a lot remained to be done by way of civic amenities there Every morning in Guangzhou, when I went for a walk along the riverside, I used to see an old woman punting a small boat and collecting firewood from the side of the river along which I walked Quite a few such boats could be seen on the other side as well Here was life lived at a fairly primitive level right in the heart of one of the biggest cities in China and one could faintly see in this a paradigm of the unevenness of development that the Chinese comrades kept talking about If it is true that for the large majority of people, starting from the old boatwoman of Guangzhou, a much better standard of living than what was now available must be created, then one can certainly understand the priority given to developing productive forces

Statistical evidence is available to prove that so far as increasing production is concerned, the liberalisation of the economy has yielded some splendid immediate results I am not here directly concerned with this, but with understanding how the construction of a 'socialist, spiritual culture' may be aided by these new experiments, and at the same time, what new problems they might create at the ideological level Just as there are in-built checks against the anarchic operation of market forces in the Chinese economy, there must be superstructural checks against bourgeois individualism, against the money-making spirit, against consumerism The possibility of economic crimes has to be combated not just by enforcing the very stringent laws against them, but by education and by raising the level of mass awareness Nor must these ideological checks be seen as being absolutely separate from the existing quality of material life the dignity of being able to work for one's own living on the one hand and the caring attitude of the State and the grassroot mass organisations for human life in general on the other

One and all of the Chinese comrades we met thought of the 'socialist commodity economy' as a long-term strategy, but of the growth of individual enterprise with its side-effects as a transitional phenomenon Wang Zhenping, vice-chairman of the Party Academy at Shanghai, for instance, emphasised the need for a multilateral approach with the individual economy supplementing State-owned and collective economies until there was 'voluntary collectivisation' He pointed out that the new allocation system in agriculture was not necessarily preferred to collectivisation and gave us the example of peasants in Shandong province who, having benefited from their collective, did not take up the allocation system He also put it to us that the fact of an individual making money should

not be automatically equated with his serving individual interests alone. Here the internal checks of a socialist system, cultural as well as economic, might have a role to play.

Take our experience of Hong Quiao township (erstwhile commune), an extremely prosperous agricultural complex near Shanghai. The peasant family we visited here consisted of the aged parents, the son and daughter-in-law and one small granddaughter. The house which belonged to the family was two-storied with two bedrooms upstairs, a parlour and another room below, a small yard with a chicken-coop and a separate, spacious kitchen. The polished furniture, the crockery, the dresses, the medium-sized television set, all spoke of a prosperity that was new. Obviously, this was one of the households which had been 'allowed to get rich more quickly'. Yet it did not seem to be a conspicuous exception. The other houses were of similar dimensions and quite a few sported television antennas. But then of course, at Hong Quiao the general living standard is higher than in most other townships in the country.

The other point was: how did a particular household get rich more quickly than others? The principal means of production, including land, is owned by the township government in rural areas. Apart from 30 square metres of land given to each able-bodied person as 'private plot', the rest of the land is allocated on a yearly contract basis to households, the size of the allocated plot being in accordance with the size of the household. The same family does not till the same piece of land every year. The land is not their property but rather their responsibility. If production can be raised in a year, the remuneration is accordingly increased. This is decided by the villagers' committee. Private trading is not allowed except in the case of what is raised in the individual plots. There are also some varieties of sideline production such as chicken-raising and pig-raising. If output here exceeds the quota fixed by the village committee, the excess belongs to the household and it can be individually sold either to State agencies or in the open market. The enrichment of individuals is not the result of anarchic market forces but of a guidance plan with distribution of responsibility at the level of township government, village committee (erstwhile production brigade) and the group. An individual does not get rich here by exploiting others' poverty but by fulfilling his responsibility in the overall enhancement of production. The result of his work is enjoyed by the entire township which had allotted it to him.

Hiring of labour in agriculture was a new phenomenon approved by the State. The number of labourers a man might employ was somewhat flexible, but such allowances were made with extreme caution. Wages could not be less than the labour-wages of neighbouring families, since every household had a plot of land allocated to it by the township and every able-bodied person had a 'private plot', it was unlikely that anyone would work as a wage-labourer because he did not have alternative means of livelihood. Also the role of the employer here would be different from that of a capitalist supplying capital and reaping profit. His role would be

more that of a specially skilled worker also working on land. This relaxation of the law that labour cannot be bought or sold has obviously been made to increase efficiency in production. It could also be one of the means — a transitional one — of coping with the rural unemployment created during the years of stagnation. But that this was sanctioned by the government meant that it might exist only within control, and again the role of the township government, of villagers' committees, etc., in educating the peasantry was crucial. At the micro-level, the production apparatus which is also a party apparatus, must intervene ideologically and promote the spirit of mutual help rather than mere competitiveness. It is through continuous ideological education that the skilled peasant must be made to help the unskilled peasants and advanced areas to help backward areas. One lesson of the Cultural Revolution possibly is that enforced equalisation cannot automatically change consciousness. The ideological programme will have to be much more effective now so that the new experiments may ultimately promote socialist values of collective living and mutual help.

The Chinese comrades are fully aware of the fact that with the opening up of China to the outside world, Western bourgeois cultural values are making a massive onslaught. During our stay in Beijing, we found that the American film *First Blood* with Stallone in the infamous role of Rambo was being shown to full houses. There was a growing market for Agatha Christie and Arthur Hailey. At the concert we attended at the International Club at Beijing, there was an amazing array of musical instruments and a highly accomplished presentation of traditional songs and dances. Comrade Chen however wryly commented that these were mostly for foreign tourists, the Chinese themselves were now going in more for Western music, sure enough, the last song we heard, by a truly talented girl from Guangzhou, was a rendering in Chinese of the theme song of *The Sound of Music*. At Shenzhen, a free economic zone, adjacent to Kowloon, side by side with one government-controlled channel on television, there were about six channels from Hong Kong pouring in the trashy films with which American mass media feed their captive audiences overseas.

But, when the windows are opened for fresh air in the morning, do not mosquitoes and insects also enter? This was the response of one Chinese comrade. The laws against economic crimes are very stringent. The administrative official with whom we had dinner at Shenzhen told us of the case of a Hong Kong businessman who had set up a nightclub in Shenzhen under cover of a restaurant and was advertising 'adult activities'. The place was closed down by the Chinese authorities and the owner extradited. And we were categorically told that the authorities have to be and are ever vigilant in such free economic zones against the import of gambling, nightclubs, pornographic films and prostitution. It was a great relief to find that the attitude of the authorities regarding such dangers, however, was practical rather than abstractly moralistic. There was no attempt to underplay the danger, but confidence came not only from in-built legal safeguards,

but from the notion of the educability of the masses and the efficacy of consciousness-raising campaigns

One symptom of this confidence in the masses was that censorship was kept at a very low key and an atmosphere of free discussion deliberately encouraged. While all mass media was under government control, far from covering up facts which the government might find embarrassing, the papers publicised them so as to stir up mass opinion. In the months before we went to China, there was some hullabaloo in the Western press about recent cases of female infanticide in China, connecting it with the new government policy of encouraging one-child families. We asked members of the All China Women's Federation about this and were told that the reported cases of female infanticide were few in number, they had happened in the outlying areas and had nothing to do with the new policy. In fact it was members of the ACWF who had detected these cases and publicised them. If public opinion could be roused, the possibility of the recurrence of such cases would be prevented not by punishment alone, but by making people aware. The Western press however had taken up the news and served it up for sensationalist purposes of its own. This relaxed atmosphere allowing free exchange of opinions was evident in the 'grievances section' in the Beijing television programme and the regular column in *China Daily*, publishing opinions of readers on controversial subjects such as 'key-schools' and the Rambo-film. The rate of road accidents is fairly low in Beijing but the government-controlled *China Daily* had no hesitation in publicising a particularly nasty accident involving a government official driving without a license, along with the news of his immediate arrest.

It must be remembered that for quite some time now in post-revolutionary China there has been a revival of interest in traditional art-forms involving literature, performance and painting. This denotes one kind of broad-mindedness, the notion that before socialist art can be created, traditional art-forms belonging to feudal times must be understood and appropriated. Now we have the Chinese laying themselves open to new influences from abroad, which have been quite unfamiliar to them so far. As one Chinese comrade said: 'Before, whatever came from abroad was bad, now there may be a tendency to accept whatever comes from abroad as good.' But the important thing here is that it is felt that victory for socialist values may be won by engaging in the combat, not by suppressing it.

Quite accidentally, during our stay in Shanghai, we saw a feature film, *Red Dress is Popular Dress*. Its mode of presentation reflected to some extent this new cultural attitude. The film dealt with a number of girls working in a textile factory. The storyline is tenuous and it is the interaction of the many characters with each other that holds the film together. The central figure is a model worker who starts with an attitude of self-righteousness, but ultimately realises that being a model worker does not mean leaving everyone behind in one's efficiency, but helping others also.

to be efficient. Then there is another girl who flaunts her apparently expensive and fashionable dresses, saying that they are brought for her by her brother in Hong Kong. She creates a lot of heart-burning among the girls, but ultimately confesses that she had lied, her people are ordinary peasants, and the dresses were bought at second hand from the free market. A third character is a free enterpriser, who sells clothes in the street. He makes a good income, but being affected by commodity mindedness does not look after his old blind father. The presentation was very low-keyed and the film did not pretend to solve the problems it was presenting. Its strength lay in that it presented them as problems of ordinary human individuals which they must solve by their own efforts and not by being moulded from above.

The film also demonstrated quite effectively the gradual loosening of traditional family ties due to the disintegration of the old social structure. With increased mobility in work and problems of accommodation, the tendency at least in cities was towards a nuclear family. Recent government policy encouraged one-child families. Combined with an increasingly greater interest in consumer-products, this might breed a mentality of seclusion and individualism which would be at variance with the aims and ideals of a socialist society. The Chinese marriage law entails that not only aged parents but also siblings unable to look after themselves must be supported. This suggests that the governmental system of old age pensions and social securities does not cover all requirements. The Chinese themselves say that the services sector is underdeveloped, the number of institutions for looking after old people, creches and canteens is far behind the need. Hence although large families are breaking up, for old people, children and those unable to look after themselves, the domestic unit remains the last resort. In these circumstances a commodity culture might also have the effect of eroding those values which centre around family responsibility, particularly in a generation getting used to living outside the joint-family system.

In a brief session with representatives of the All China Women's Federation, Madhu Prasad and I found that, in collaboration with other mass organisations, they made it one of their tasks to build up a sense of community at the grassroots level and to make up for the weakness of the services sector. To withstand the isolation of the new small families they made door-to-door trips through neighbourhood committees, counselling young parents about children's health, supplying pre-school education, giving legal advice and arranging in cooperation with labour organisations social occasions for young men and women to meet so that eventually they can freely choose their marital partners. One feels generally that it is the caring attitude that matters, it is the sense of neighbourliness and mutual help, such as that reflected in the social work undertaken by the All China Women's Federation, that may help to balance the transitional problems created by nuclear families and by consumerism.

The task of the ACWF is particularly tough in that the work of combating human isolation that comes from the inevitable crumbling of the feudal joint-family system has to be combined with struggle against the remnants of feudal tyranny over women within the family and discrimination at the place of work. In this the ACWF has of course the full support of marriage laws and labour laws and the support of the concerned ministry and labour organisations. But attitudes are slow to change. The education level of women is still low, 70 per cent of those who still remain illiterate in China are women. Sometimes men are preferred for certain kinds of work, and these tend to become the preserves of men. Occasionally during enrolment examinations of factories a lower level of performance is required for men to qualify. Moreover, while in 90 per cent of the families in China now both the wife and the husband work, the services sector is still relatively undeveloped so that the greater share of domestic chores, if not the whole of it, falls upon the wife. This is true even for the younger generation, where the husband generally does some domestic work. With the new emphasis on skill and efficiency, the greater freedom in planning given to the management in industries, and the problem of redundancy, however marginal, created by modernisation, was it not likely that unskilled workers such as women would be left 'waiting for work' in larger numbers, that the management would prefer men to women as workers, and that thus more women might be pushed back into the domestic sphere again?

We received clear and candid answers to our questions. The possibility of discrimination against women as workers was not being underestimated at all. The unambiguous safeguards for women's rights offered by the laws had to be continuously checked and re-checked for effectiveness. It was for mass organisations like the ACWF spreading to the grassroots to take up any such cases of discrimination in jobs, to argue with and pressurise the erring management, and to communicate with labour organisations and the relevant ministry so that the offender could be brought to book. They had in fact dealt with such cases in the past with success and had used the mass-media to publicise cases of discrimination. At the same time the need to create more job opportunities and opportunities of training for women was emphasised and what was reiterated over and over again was the need to improve the services sector with facilities for creches and canteens so that domestic labour is minimised. The new economic policy by enriching the economy might create more and more such facilities. Its gains could ultimately be greater than the specific problems it seemed initially to accentuate. But in this too the importance of ideological work was crucial.

Socialist practice is something we have so far been able to understand only at second hand. We tend to put our own construction on empirical data and the endless tirade of the bourgeois press against socialism affects

our construction. If the visit to China had any positive intellectual effect on me it was to make me aware of the danger of simplifying the problems of socialist practice by refusing to see categories describing it as being linked to a specific context.

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Four Decades of Economic Development

A Perspective on the Recent Phase of India's Economic Development Prabhat Patnaik	3
Some Aspects of Development in the Agrarian Sector in Independent India Utsa Patnaik	17
Indian Fiscal Model: A Case of Increasing Centralisation I.S. Gulati	41
A Note on Unemployment and Living Standards in the Unorganised Sector Abhijit Sen	50
Book Review: Revolt and Religion: Petty-Bourgeois Romanticisation Suneet Chopra	60

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NUMBER 2

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1 A Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977

2 See R Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', *Journal of Comparative Economics*, December 1979, pp 325-45

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EDITORIAL NOTE

FOUR decades after Independence, the Indian economy presents a mixed picture in terms of performance. While the rates of growth of production and income during these years compare favourably with the record under colonial rule during the first half of the century, there is evidence to suggest that the nature and direction of the process of growth have been such that not only are there significant constraints facing Indian development, but also that the benefits of this growth have been unequally distributed across regions and classes. In the net, an annual 3-3.5 per cent rate of growth of income over four decades notwithstanding, more than two-fifths of India's population lives below a rather conservatively defined poverty line, providing the most damning indictment of the path of development that has been pursued hitherto.

Yet, till recently, certain macro-economic indicators were being selectively chosen by both official spokesmen and some academic economists to buttress the argument that matters appear to have changed for the better over the last decade. Large foodstocks, that were ostensibly an indicator of "self-sufficiency", a revival in the rate of industrial growth and India's relatively moderate exposure to international debt were all referred to in the official case for optimism. The evidence, it appeared, offered the basis for divergent assessments.

This issue of *Social Scientist* includes four of a set of papers presented at a recent seminar organised by the journal, that critically assessed different aspects of the path of development over the last four decades. All of them focus on aspects of the region- and class-wise concentration of the benefits of growth, and their implications for the pace of development. In the first of these, Prabhat Patnaik provides an explanation for the observed revival of industrial growth during the recent phase of Indian development, in which the ability of the state to squeeze out a surplus from agriculture without raising its rate of growth relative to population, plays a crucial role. Underlying this ability is the remarkably high regional concentration in agricultural growth that Utsa Patnaik's paper identifies as the fall-out of the strategy of agrarian change pursued since Independence. That strategy, while not attacking land monopoly that could rid the countryside of the basis for pre-capitalist relationship, sought to induce landlords to go in for productive investment on land. As a result, the full potential of the available land surface under the prevalent technological conditions could not be exploited (as evident from a comparison with the Chinese experience), resulting in a near stagnation in the per capita availability of food in the country.

This failure of "semifeudal capitalism" did not imply that there were no sections that were taking successfully to the new technology. Rather, increases in agricultural production were concentrated in a few states that

accounted for a dominant share of the marketable surplus that filled government godowns, while others even saw a decline in per capita production and incomes. This, according to Prabhat Patnaik, ensured that large tracts of the country lacked the wherewithal to absorb these surpluses, resulting in an underconsumption-induced accumulation of food stocks, in a period when per capita availability was stagnant.

These stocks provided the basis for deficit financed investment and expenditure that not only resulted in a much sharper increase in profits but also in the incomes of the organised and vocal urban working and middle classes, who were to an extent "pacified" in this manner, the slow rate of overall growth notwithstanding. As Abhijit Sen demonstrates in his paper, since the early 1970s not only are incomes in the urban organised sector higher than in the unorganised sector in both rural and urban areas, but there have been significant increases in average per worker incomes in the sector. These incomes, according to Prabhat Patnaik, have provided the market for an import intensive set of manufactured goods that are the leading sectors in the 'recovery' from the industrial stagnation of the 1960s and early 1970s. Thus, the transition from that phase of stagnation to a phase of moderate recovery as of the late-1970s, followed a shift from a period of "classic profit inflation that squeezed real wages" to one where the squeeze on agriculture was used to sustain a non-inflationary increase in urban demand. That is, the success of capitalist industrialisation in an economy where agrarian reforms have not ensured an expansion in the mass market for manufactured consumption goods, depends on the ability of the state to finance that development through a squeeze on agriculture—though that ability has as its essential component the maintenance of the large mass of the rural poor in a position where they are even unable to meet their requirements of food. However, such a strategy is not without constraints. The growth in the consumption of import intensive manufactures it involves renders the balance of payments and not the agricultural bottleneck, the binding constraint on economic development.

The fall-out in terms of uneven regional growth that this process implies has not been corrected for through state action, as I S Gulati's analysis indicates. In fact regional diversity is only being further aggravated by the nature of the financial regime under India's quasi-federal system. Statutory transfers of the Finance Commissions notwithstanding, the process of centralising revenues in the hands of the central government continues apace, resulting in the fact that most states have become totally dependent on grants, loans and plan transfers from the Centre to meet their current and capital expenditures. Combined with the trends spoken of earlier, this provides the basis for the growth of separatist tendencies in both the backward states denuded of the fruits of development and the more developed ones that see themselves as being deprived of the full benefits of their prosperity.

*PRABHAT PATNAIK**

A Perspective on the Recent Phase of India's Economic Development

1. MANY FIND it incomprehensible that Marxist economists should paint a grim picture of the performance of the Indian economy since independence, which according to conventional macro-indicators has been quite sound, if not spectacular. The economy, they argue, has grown over a prolonged period at an annual rate of over three-and-a-half per cent, thus reversing the decline in per capita income that characterised the last half century of British rule; it has managed to keep the trend rate of inflation to below ten percent; it has had significant technological achievements to its credit, the latest being in the sphere of oil extraction, it has achieved, no doubt at a low level of consumption, self-sufficiency in foodgrains, and, prior to the current drought, had built up a sizeable foodgrain stock of around 23 million tonnes; and it has done all this with very little commercial borrowing from abroad over the period as a whole. In view of this performance, no doubt less spectacular than that of socialist China or capitalist South-Korea, but a solid one nonetheless, aren't the dire forebodings of Marxist economists simply reflective of their usual recourse to hyperbole?

Differences in evaluating the performance of the economy arise because of differences in the things which are being looked at. Marxist economists look beyond the macro-indicators mentioned above, into the nature and direction of the process of development, including its social and political consequences. In short, their terrain of discourse is altogether different. An attempt, would be made in this paper to raise certain issues within this terrain of discourse, which, no matter what one thinks of their treatment here, are of unquestionable importance.

2. It is a commonplace proposition that capitalist development in the post-independence period has been sought to be promoted on the basis of an agrarian structure which has witnessed no significant reduction in the extent of land concentration. The bourgeois leadership of the national movement which had earlier given the slogan of "land to the tiller", went back upon that slogan in the years after independence. The land reforms

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that were carried out, while abolishing certain kinds of intermediary tenure and eliminating significantly the very large, and often absentee, landlords, did not mean the end of landlordism. At one end, a somewhat more homogeneous class of landlords was created, at the other end, there was outright eviction or degradation in status of large numbers of petty-tenants, and, in between, a section of rich peasant tenants moved up the social scale by acquiring ownership rights. But, land concentration was not broken. The landownership data for 1953-54 (NSS 8th round) give a gini coefficient of 0.676, while those for 1970-71 (NSS 26th round) give a gini coefficient of 0.675.¹ Meanwhile, the proportion of agricultural labourers in the total of cultivators and labourers rose significantly, from 28 per cent in 1951 to at least 35 per cent in 1971.²

Under these circumstances, the transformation of agriculture, within the overall context of capitalist development of the economy, was, perforce, characterised, predominantly, by the development of a semi-feudal capitalism in the countryside.³ This was already implicit in the logic of the land reform legislations.⁴ Since a wholesale attack on landed property, as envisaged in the "land-to-the-tiller" slogan, was ruled out, lest it rebound into an attack on bourgeois property, the land reform legislations themselves contained clauses (eg. land being exempt from ceiling laws if some investment had been undertaken on it) which essentially enjoined upon the landlords the need to convert themselves into capitalist landlords. And the entire thrust of a series of programmes, starting from the third plan period, was to make inputs available, especially to the rural rich, who could shift to more intensive cultivation along capitalist lines. The extent to which the landlords actually shifted to new methods of cultivation and undertook productive investments on land has of course differed across regions, depending *inter alia* upon the availability of yield-raising innovations which investment could activate. But there can be little doubt that a tendency towards landlord capitalism has been evident almost throughout the country.

3. Under this dispensation, the growth of agricultural output and incomes, taking the country as a whole, has been meagre, especially in view of the gap that exists between our actual yields and the potential yields (as measured for instance by the achievements of Japanese and Chinese agriculture). Professor Dandekar has recently shown that the real net domestic product originating in agriculture, when taken per head of the agriculture dependent population, has scarcely not shown any noticeable increase over the post-independence period as a whole. To be sure, the decline in per capita real NDP of the agriculture-dependent population, that had characterised the half-century before independence, has been halted, but it has not been reversed. Dandekar's conclusions are borne out quite clearly if we look at the period since 1970-71 for which we have, from *National Accounts Statistics*, a continuous series of sector-wise NDP at constant

prices Taking the period 1970-71 to 1983-84, which has peak harvest years as end-points, we find that NDP at factor cost (at 1970-71 prices) originating in agriculture, increased at an average annual compound rate of 2.1 per cent This was certainly less than the rate of growth of overall population, as well as of the work-force as revealed by the decennial censuses. Moreover, if we take the work-force engaged in agriculture, as shown by the censuses, and assume that the same rate of annual growth obtained between 1981 and 1983, as did over 1971-81, then the real NDP originating in agriculture per head of the agricultural work-force, and hence by assumption of the agriculture-dependent population, was a mere 4 per cent higher in absolute terms in 1983-84 compared to 1970-71. This is a picture of virtual stagnation.

When we additionally bear in mind the fact that within agriculture, the share of interest, rent and profits went up over this same period, according to official statistics, from 7.8 to 11.4 per cent, the proposition that the agricultural work-force did not see any improvement in its real income from work, gets further strengthened. Thus, what Dandekar argues as being true of the entire post-independence period, certainly holds for the period since 1970-71 taken in isolation. Moreover, since in this latter period, growth in output was concentrated in a particular region, it follows that over large tracts of the country the bulk of the agricultural population got impoverished in absolute terms.

4 It may be argued, of course, that what is relevant for assessing real income trends is a deflation of money income movements, not by production prices, but by the price-index of commodities purchased. In short, the real NDP movements alone would not do, what is necessary in addition is an examination of the terms of trade movements. But, two points should be borne in mind in this context: first, favourable terms of trade directly benefit only the surplus farmers. For the vast mass of agricultural population, which consumes very little by way of industrial goods, it is the share in real agricultural output, no matter what is happening to the terms of trade, that provides an index of the level of living. Terms of trade between sectors may enter in more complex ways into the level of living of the rural poor, on which more later, but have little *direct* bearing upon it. Secondly, even if we do look at terms of trade movements, we find that taking the postindependence period *as a whole*, the shift in terms of trade has been marginal. Between 1951-52 and 1963-64, there is very little change in the net barter terms of trade as worked out by R. Thamarajakshi.⁸ They improve in favour of agriculture in 1964-65 and reach a peak in 1973-74, after which there is a sharp decline. Between 1951-52 and 1970-71, Thamarajakshi's estimates show a 26 per cent improvement in the net barter terms of trade in favour of agriculture. Between 1970-71 and 1980-81, Kahlon—Tyagi estimates show a 13 per cent decline.⁹ These two estimates, having different base years, and hence look-

ing at the relative price movements of different sets of commodity baskets, are of course not comparable. Even so, if we do take the liberty of linking the two series together, it turns out that between 1951-52 and 1980-81, the shift in terms of trade in favour of agriculture was a mere 10 per cent

It follows, then that terms of trade movements do not nullify the conclusions we arrived at earlier, namely that taking the agricultural work force *as a whole*, the post-independence period has witnessed little improvement in its real income from work, and that within this work-force, given widening class and regional disparities, significant sections may well have seen a decline in their real per capita income.

II

5 I would, however, like to look at this question of a squeeze on the agricultural work-force from a slightly different angle. In a situation of sluggish agricultural growth, an effort to accelerate the overall growth of the economy inevitably generates inflationary pressures, as Michal Kalecki had argued cogently years ago.¹⁰ This inflation is in the nature of what Keynes would have called a "profit-inflation", generating forced savings through a squeeze on those whose money incomes adjust slowly to price-increases. Since agriculture constitutes the bottleneck, such a profit-inflation would be accompanied typically by a shift in terms of trade *in favour of* agriculture, and its victims would be the agricultural labourers and the semi-proletariat in rural areas, and urban workers, including even the salariat. The fact that such a "profit-inflation" occurred in India, notably in the period between 1964-65 and 1974-75, is obvious.¹¹

But, the period since then has been remarkable in the sense that despite the fact that the rate of agricultural growth has not accelerated compared to the previous decade, despite the fact that there has been some increase in the growth of the secondary and tertiary sectors, taken together, compared to the previous decade, the terms of trade over this period have moved sharply *against* agriculture, and moreover at the end of the period 23 million tonnes of unsold stocks have accumulated in the hands of the government! In other words, a food surplus, even larger than could be absorbed by a faster-growing non-agricultural sector, has been squeezed out of an agriculture that has grown no faster, when just a few years ago, agriculture appeared to be a constraint. This sudden turn-around to a new situation which apparently contradicts not only the Kaleckian formulation, but also much of what one learns to expect in an underdeveloped country like India, is what I shall try and examine in the rest of the paper; my attention therefore will be focussed on the recent period, since the mid-seventies,

III

6. In my opinion, the new situation is the result of a drastic squeeze on the agricultural work-force, a squeeze that is different in character from that which is entailed in a classic profit-inflation situation. The mechanism of this squeeze has been two fold through an extremely uneven pattern of regional growth in agricultural production, and through an adverse movement in the terms of trade administered by the government. Let us examine each of these factors in turn.

7. Within the overall stagnation of the per capita real NDP of the agriculture-dependent population, there are significant regional variations.¹² The northern region consisting of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a notable increase in per capita real NDP, in the eastern region consisting of M P, West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam there has perhaps been a marginal increase. But in the rest of the country comprising its southern and western tracts, per capita real NDP of the agriculture-dependent population has actually declined. To be sure, there are variations within each of these regions, but as a broad picture of the growth-experience, this is as good as any. Now in the declining regions, income per capita declines with output, and so does demand. But, in the rapidly growing regions, as income per capita increases with output, the demand for foodgrains does not rise *pari passu*, since consumption is sought to be diversified. As a result, growing regional inequalities throw up a growing surplus even in the face of a stagnant real NDP per head of the agriculture-dependent population for the country as a whole. To put it differently, since the income elasticity of demand for foodgrains is inversely related to income, widening regional disparities, even within an overall stagnation of per capita income of the agricultural population, must lead to the emergence of surplus food-stocks, owing to under consumption by the agricultural population in the declining regions. This is but an analogue of the standard under consumption thesis on aggregate demand in advanced capitalist countries.

8. Terms of trade movements constitute a second, additional, factor. Their effect cannot of course be discussed without taking into consideration the whole complex of distributional shifts that go with them. For instance, a shift in terms of trade in favour of agriculture may be accompanied by varying combinations of declines in real wage and profit-margins in the non-agricultural sector. And even within agriculture, better terms of trade would typically go with lower rates of real earnings for the agricultural labourers and the semi-proletariat, as happens in the classic profit-inflation situation mentioned above. What happens to the demand-supply situation as regards foodgrains in consequence of terms of trade shifts, depends upon how the expenditure-pattern of the gainers from the shift compares with the expenditure-pattern of the losers from the shift. Now, it seems plausible that while product-wages within agriculture fall in periods of improving

terms of trade, they do not necessarily rise in periods of declining terms of trade, i.e. the landlords pass losses from a deterioration in the terms of trade to the agricultural labourers, but not the gains from an improvement. It is also plausible that given the prevailing expenditure-patterns, the expenditure rounds generated by the accrual of a rupee to the rural rich are likely on the whole to be more food-intensive, than the expenditure rounds generated by a similar accrual to the non-agricultural sector, no matter how it is distributed between the workers and the capitalists, this is because of the demand of the rural rich for a variety of simple labour services. It follows that terms of trade movements against agriculture have the effect, paradoxically, of releasing surplus stocks via a lower growth of employment and food demand in the rural sector itself.

9 It is hardly surprising that the period since the mid-seventies which has witnessed a deterioration in agriculture's terms of trade has also witnessed some increase in the tempo of industrial growth compared to the previous decade. No doubt, the overall tempo of industrial growth still remains at none-too-impressive a level, but a certain increase over the previous decade seems clear enough. The thrust of economic policy over the recent decade has been to shift the terms of trade against agriculture, rely exclusively upon the small belt of high growth states to feed the public distribution system, covering largely the urban areas, and thus keep the pressure on food prices low both in urban as well as rural areas. Low food prices in urban areas release purchasing power for a larger demand for industrial goods, additionally, taking advantage of low food prices, and the comfortable food stocks situation arising from the under consumption of the rural work-force in large tracts of the country, the government has stepped up its expenditure, financed by ever growing budget deficits, notably upon civil administration and defence, which has also contributed, directly and indirectly, to the sustenance of demand for a variety of industrial goods.

10 Looking at it differently, growing public expenditure on civil administration and defence, financed by increasing budget deficits, which would normally have created profit inflationary pressures both in the urban and the rural areas, has not done so, because the squeeze on the incomes of the rural population has obviated the necessity for forced savings through a profit-inflation. After all, real wages, or real incomes of the work-force in any economy, can be squeezed in two ways either through a rise in prices relative to money wages, or through a depression of money wages relative to base prices. Income deflation in other words can be a substitute for profit-inflation. What the economy has witnessed over the last decade is an income deflation of the rural work-force substituting for a profit-inflation against the entire work-force, including industrial and white-collar workers. It is this which has kept inflationary pressures in check.

11 The fact that inflation has been kept below double digit figures, which is claimed as one of the achievements of Indian economic policy in

recent years, is thus an "achievement" at the expense of the agricultural population over large parts of the country. Like-wise the claim of official policy that economic growth has accelerated in recent years is based largely upon the fact that government expenditure upon civil administration and defence has increased as is well-known, in conventional national income statistics, an increase in expenditure upon civil administration and defence figures as an increase in national income. In short, it is a superficial view, which ignores the underlying processes and their social implication and fetishises figures of "growth-rate" and "inflation-rate", that would characterise as "successes" and "achievements" phenomena whose consequences, as we shall see later, are likely to be dangerous for the polity and society.

IV

12. Before proceeding further, an illustration to bring home the point being made here, may be in order. In the 1979-80 agricultural year, foodgrains output dropped by 22 million tonnes, or about 17 percent. No net imports of foodgrains were undertaken to counteract the affects of this drop; on the contrary, the 1980 calendar year saw a net export of .48 million tonnes which was larger than the previous year's .33 m tonnes. Consequently, the per capita daily net availability of foodgrains dropped to 410.4 gms in 1980 compared to 476.5 the previous year. And yet the wholesale price of foodgrains in the course of the financial year 1980-81 rose by only 18 per cent. By contrast, in 1972-73 an 11 million (roughly 11 per cent) drop in foodgrain output, even when counter balanced by 3.59 m. tonnes of net imports, had brought about in the course of the financial year 1973-74, a 26 per cent increase in foodgrain prices¹

A phenomenon similar to what happened in 1979-80 can be observed for 1982-83 as well. In short, the response of foodgrain price to output drops has become considerably muted in recent years. This muted response has nothing whatsoever to do with any wizardry in economic management. It is simply that in 1979-80, as well as in 1982-83, the output in that region which almost exclusively feeds the public distribution system, namely the region around Punjab, did not show a drop, as a result, procurement was sustained, and the public distribution system was able to take care of the urban consumers. As for the rural consumers, since their incomes and demand fell together with output, the pressure on prices was contained. And preventing any significant increase in procurement prices ensured that issue prices did not have to be raised for the urban consumers.

The policy of institutionalising massive rural under consumption as a means of combating inflationary pressures has never been as evident as in the current year. In the face of what has been officially described as the worst drought since independence, no attempt has been made to import foodgrains, because the calculation is that procurement from Punjab, which reportedly is good, together with some decumulation of the ample stocks

held, would be adequate for maintaining even a somewhat enlarged public distribution system. The fact that the sharp drop in output would reduce rural incomes and consumption, and the consequent necessity for doing something to prevent this consumption decline, does not figure in official calculations. It may well turn out that the government's calculations are correct, and that the current year will end up showing a lower rate of inflation than had been widely anticipated, but that would essentially mean that the moderate pace of inflation even in a year of disastrous drought would have been achieved at the expense of massive rural under consumption.

To sum up underlying the apparent success in inflation control in recent years is large-scale and growing rural under consumption. This under consumption, by its very nature as Engels had argued, does not show itself in terms of price pressures, but it is there. Indeed, it constitutes the corner stone of economic policy in recent years.

V

13 Many, including Professor Dandekar himself, have concluded from this fact of growing rural under consumption that in India the nature of class-contradiction is such that it is the organised sector, consisting of both capitalists and workers, which exploits the unorganised sector. This proposition, namely that an exploitative relationship exists in a modern capitalist economy primarily between the organised and the unorganised sectors, which was put forward many years ago in the context of the U.S. economy by John Kenneth Galbraith,¹³ is something which I obviously disagree with. Its conceptual basis in my opinion is shaky - the concepts of class and exploitation that are used are not very coherent¹⁴ and the notion of "unequal exchange" which is some times brought into buttress the concept of exploitation cannot be logically sustained.¹⁵ And even empirically, such a formulation ignores the fact that until the mid-seventies at any rate, we had a period of classic profit-inflation that squeezed real wages even of the organised workers, and attempted to sustain this squeeze through draconian anti-working class measures, and anti-working class ordinances which still remain on the statute books.

What is true however is that it is the very organised strength of the industrial working class, and, even more important, the articulateness of the urban middle class, including white-collar workers, which made classic profit-inflation politically unsustainable. Pressed by the need on the one hand to control inflation in order to placate urban opinion, and on the other hand to maintain a reasonable tempo of government expenditure and investment, economic policy shifted towards a tilt in the terms of trade, against agriculture and the imposition of an income deflation upon the agricultural work-force. All this does not however by any means imply

that the industrial working-class or even the urban white-collar workers and petty-bourgeoisie are part of an exploiting or ruling class-formation.

14 The shift in policy came about not necessarily out of a conscious strategic choice; more likely, it was an immediate response to a pressing problem, which happened to click and therefore got institutionalised. The critical turning point perhaps was the decision of the government, in its desperation to control the 1974 inflationary upsurge to keep procurement prices pegged in that year. The need to reverse this decision never arose in the 1975-76 season which witnessed a bumper crop. And as experience showed that procurement from the fastgrowing northern region could be counted upon, even when upward revisions in procurement prices were kept within a limited range, the new policy acquired a durability. Like all strategic decisions, this strategy too began therefore as a happens tance, nevertheless it has now acquired a status where to *describe* it as a strategy of squeezing the agricultural work-force in order to sustain capitalist industrialisation without severe inflationary pressures, would not be an overstatement.

VI

15 But then, is this not precisely the strategy which, as Preobrazhensky had argued, had characterised capitalist industrialisation in general, and which he had advocated, no doubt with significant modifications, in the different milieu of the young Soviet Union to hasten the process of socialist industrialisation? And if it is the case that as a matter of fact, since the midseventies, inflation has been, relatively speaking, kept in check, that the rate of industrial growth has been some what higher, that government budget deficits have been apparently absorbed, and that class-strife in urban India has been muted, without simultaneously giving rise, as yet, to any unmanageably intense class-opposition from the country-side, can we not say that Indian capitalism has finally managed to grope its way towards an appropriate form of primitive accumulation of capital required from its point of view, that it has succeeded in manipulating the contradictions of the system in a way that assures it reasonable stability? What can be the new contradictions if any that it faces in its pursuit of the strategy of squeezing the agricultural work-force?

16. The first contradiction is the following a squeeze on the agricultural work-force, while it releases foodgrains and thereby lifts the food constraint, makes the foreign exchange constraint more binding. To be sure, unless both constraints happened coincidentally to be binding at the same time to start with, the lifting of one need not logically mean the tightening of another. But that is a static view of the matter. If burgeoning urban consumption is to become the basis for industrial growth, then clearly it provides a very tenuous basis. In any third world country, tastes in urban areas are shaped by fashions prevalent in metropolitan centres,

Pressure for import liberalisation, for more liberal access to foreign goods or foreign equipment and components for the manufacture of such goods domestically, builds up. And this pressure is not confined only to the case of consumption goods, it encompasses producer goods and even the goods required to meet the growing defence expenditure. Now, if domestically produced goods could be exported with ease, then all this would not matter; then, capitalist industrialisation, detached from the necessity of having to develop the internal mass-market, and using the countryside solely for the purpose of obtaining appropriate supplies of food at suppressed prices, could proceed apace without any fear of balance of payments difficulties. But such is not the case. And certainly not in the current situation of world capitalism. A strategy of industrialisation, which has as its basis a squeeze on the agricultural work-force and a catering, essentially, to the urban market, must run into problems of balance of payments fairly soon. Such is the specificity of a third world country like India, which differs in this respect from Preobrazhensky's Russia as well as from capitalist countries of yesteryears.

17. The second obvious problem which may not of course make its appearance immediately is that such a squeeze on the countryside may ultimately choke off agricultural growth itself. For a while, notwithstanding the fact of declining regions, notwithstanding the adverse movement in the terms of trade, industrialisation may be carried forward on the backs of the growing regions alone. But, as soon as a plateau is reached as regards production in these regions the food constraint would reappear with a vengeance. In short, such a squeeze on the agricultural work-force can at best be a transient phenomenon; over a period of time it is bound to catch up and stultify the industrialisation process.

18. The third problem is perhaps the most serious of all, and it is of a socio-political kind. The very fact that what is being promoted in the countryside is a semi-feudal capitalism, means that old semi-feudal institutions, consciousness and ties remain, though enmeshed in new bourgeois ones. A squeeze on the agricultural work-force in such a situation may well generate a feudal revival under the guise of reactionary populism. The fact that the bulk of the peasantry and agricultural labourers may objectively be in antagonistic contradiction with the feudal and semi-feudal elements that typically spearhead such a revival, is no guarantee against it. As Palmiro Togliatti had written in the context of Indian fascism: "The class struggle develops very slowly in these villages. When one group moves in a certain direction, other groups, although different from the viewpoint of their social standing, take the same path. They take it because as debtors, employees etc., they are dependent on the former. Class positions are not very sharply defined. The positions of the lawyer, of the money lender are important because they determine shifts of elements who objectively are in contradiction with these positions. These are the paths by which fascism was able to gain ground in the country-

side after the war."¹⁶ Where the revolutionary movement is weak, reactionary populism can gain ground easily it becomes easy to portray the industrial proletariat as a mere constituent of the 'city,' and not as a part of the oppressed, and proletarian parties as mere representatives of the city elite.

Reactionary populist sentiments were an important component of the rural appeal of Nazism in Germany. In third world countries they can easily become a component of fundamentalist movements. But no matter what particular movement they nourish they are essentially anti-democratic in character. But the threat to democracy does not come from this quarter alone. It may also happen that the bourgeoisie itself, in the face of loss of support within the peasantry, may jettison bourgeois parliamentary institutions.

19. More generally, the economic context within which bourgeois democracy has found itself floundering in a number of third world countries can be summed up as follows : in such countries where bourgeois development occurred in a situation of compromise with landlord property, and where old feudal attitudes and institutions have not been fought against in a revolutionary struggle, the social base of the bourgeoisie is narrow to start with. The process of capitalist development narrows it further: whether capitalist industrialisation is accompanied by a profit-inflation which squeezes the rural and urban poor and the salaried, or whether profit-inflation is substituted by a squeeze on the countryside, the bourgeoisie finds itself progressively isolated from the support of other social classes, and this attenuates the basis for the survival of bourgeois democracy

VII

20. The foregoing must not be construed merely as an argument for better terms of trade for agriculture, or for the pursuit of a different set of policies within the existing system of property-relations. Its real purport is to underline the inter-relationship between property relations and the nature of economic and social development. Central to the specific argument of this paper is a distinction between two alternative trajectories of growth. Where industrialisation occurs within a framework of extreme land concentration, and the consequent dominance of a class of landlords over the social and economic life of the countryside, the meagreness of agricultural growth and the widening class and regional disparities in the countryside, which follow from this dominance, keep the large potential rural market untapped for industry. The domestic market remains confined largely to the urban consumers, who, no matter what their absolute numbers are, constitute a small segment of the population. This form of industrialisation has a narrow social base, becomes plagued fairly soon with balance of payments difficulties, has little impact upon unemployment and the sectoral distribution of the work-force and is altogether of a fragile charac

ter. The fact that even a country like India with the legacy of a historic freedom struggle, and with a framework of democratic institutions, also appears to be getting bogged down in the morass of such an industrialisation path, only underscores the point. As against this, one can think of an alternative trajectory of growth, a pre-condition for which is an attack on landlordism, where industrialisation is based essentially upon the potentially vast rural market that comes into its own as a result of rapid agricultural growth with an even regional spread. Such industrialisation is socially more broad-based, is more intensive in its use of local resources, and is hence more effective as an antidote to unemployment and backwardness.

21. Japan is often seen as a counter-example of this, in my view erroneously. While in the pre-war period, Japanese industrialisation occurred on the basis of a sluggish agriculture, and involved a substantial squeeze on the peasantry, which was in no mean way responsible for the eventual denouement of fascism and war, the war itself virtually destroyed Japanese landlordism even before the occupation regime had formally abolished it. An important component of the post-war Japanese "miracle", in its initial stages during the fifties, was the extremely rapid rate of growth of agriculture, following the abolition of landlordism, which not only expanded the home market, but also enabled Japan to achieve remarkably high growth rates in the industrial sector virtually without any inflationary pressures. Japan's conquest of external markets followed, and sustained this rapid industrialisation, which was initially triggered off *inter alia* by the rapidly growing agricultural sector¹⁷

22. Of late there has been much criticism of the home market-oriented import-substituting industrialisation policies pursued in many third world countries like India behind protectionist barriers. The debate has remained confined to the terrain of controls versus decontrol, price signals versus government directives, tariff protection versus quantitative import restrictions, free market versus state intervention and regulation, and so on. These are issues on which positions no doubt have to be taken involving as they do, in the ultimate analysis, the relationship with metropolitan capital. It is time however to change the problematic itself. What is questionable about the position of the proponents of "liberalisation" is not just the thesis that a "liberal" regime entailing the freer play of market forces can bring about rapid economic advance, but the basic premise that it is the nature of the economic regime *alone* that matters as far as the prospects for economic advance are concerned, not property-relations, not class correlations, not economic structures, not the nature of the state. Clearly for countries the size of India, industrialisation can be only of one kind, namely agriculture led, or, more accurately, agriculture-sustained. A removal of fetters upon agricultural advance constitutes a pre-condition for the economic advance of our society. It the prospects for capitalist

industrialisation in economies like ours appears limited, the basic reason for it lies in the inability of the bourgeoisie to remove these fetters upon the release of productive forces in agriculture

1. These figures are taken from A. Venkateswaralu, *Regional variations in Agrarian structure 1953-54 to 1970-71* M. Phil thesis J N U.
2. For a careful discussion of the proportion of agricultural labourers in the total work-force engaged in agriculture in 1951, See Daniel and Alice Thorner, *Land and Labour in India*, Bombay 1965.
3. The term "semi-feudal capitalism" was originally used by Lenin to describe junker capitalism. For a fuller discussion of the issue, See Utsa Patnaik, *The Agrarian Question and the Development of Capitalism in India* (Delhi, 1986)
4. For a comprehensive discussion of land Reform measures, See P.C. Joshi, *Land Reforms in India*, New Delhi, 1982
5. V M Dandekar, "Poverty, Employment and Growth", paper presented to the Boston seminar on the Indian economy, published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Agriculture, 1986
6. For the colonial period I have relied on the standard estimates of G Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India 1891-1947* (Philadelphia, 1966) and S Sivasubramanian, "Estimates of output in undivided India" in V K.R.V. Rao et al ed *Papers on National Income and Allied Topics* Vol 1 (London, 1960).
7. For a detailed discussion of the estimates which follow, See my paper "Some Comments on the Recent Growth Performance of the Indian Economy", forthcoming in *EPW* Special Number, 1987
8. R Thamarajakshi, "Role of Price Incentives in Stimulating Agricultural Production", in D Ensminger ed *Food Enough or Starvation for Millions*, New Delhi, 1977.
9. A.S. Kahlon and D S Tyagi, *Agricultural Price Policy in India*, Delhi, 1983
10. M Kalecki, "Problems of Financing Economic Development in a Mixed Economy" in *Selected Essays on the Economic Growth of the Socialist and Mixed Economy* (Cambridge, 1971)
11. It is this which provided the backdrop for Ashok Mitra's *Terms of Trade and Class Relations*, (London 1977), and S Chakravarty's "Reflections on the Growth Process of the Indian Economy".
12. See the paper by Utsa Patnaik, "Some Perspectives on Agrarian Development in India", presented at the *Social Scientist* seminar on "Four Decades of Economic Development", New Delhi, Nov 18-20, 1987
13. Among Galbraith's many writings on the subject, reference may be made to *Economics and the Public Purpose*

14. Professor Dandekar's original paper, together with a critical discussion, appeared in a special issue of *Artha Vijnana* in 1978. For a long critical review, See Parvez Alam "Class Contradictions in Indian Society", Delhi 1980
15. Krishna Bharadwaj, "A Note on Emmanuel's 'Unequal—Exchange' " in P. Patnaik ed *Lenin And Imperialism*, Delhi, 1986
16. Palmiro Togliatti, *Lectures on Fascism* (London, 1976), p 121.
17. See Takafusa Nakamura, *The Post-War Japanese Economy*, (Tokyo, 1983) Chs 2 and 5

UTSA PATNAIK*

Some Aspects of Development in the Agrarian Sector in Independent India

1. A comprehensive overview of all the major trends with respect to the agrarian sector during the last four decades, is a necessary but formidable task which will not be attempted in this brief paper even assuming that we had the necessary expertise. Our purpose is to highlight selectively some of the developments which we consider to be the most important in terms of providing insights into the nature of the changes which we have witnessed. It is often useful not to confine the analysis to a *sui-generis* level by looking at Indian development within its own institutional frame of reference alone, or in relation to its own past history : for it is bound to constrain our view of what is possible, if the possible is conceived narrowly within the given matrix of social relations. For this reason we will refer frequently to the experience of China, which started with very similar and in some ways more acute problems than India, for we think that a study of this experience is productive of important insights into our own problems.

We may broadly distinguish between the trends in the physical indicators subsumed under the level of productive forces including technical changes; and the socio-economic indicators of changes in the structure of distribution of assets and income over different classes within the rural population. These two aspects are of course closely interrelated : not in a rigid deterministic sort of way but in terms of alternative strategies of development. The precise nature of the reciprocal inter relationship between the level of the productive forces and the social relations of production becomes clearer in a comparative analysis of societies which have followed different strategies of agrarian change, as have India and China.

Agricultural Production and per capita foodgrains availability

The trends with respect to these variables for the half-century before Independence have been intensively studied by Sivasubramanian (1962) and Blyn (1966) who reach similar conclusions.¹ The most striking feature is virtual stagnation in foodgrains output (the average annual production in the last decade, 1937-47 was only 7 per cent higher than in the first decade,

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1897-1907) which grew at a trend rate of 0.11 per cent per annum. In all regions of British India an accelerating population growth from after World War I, outstripped this low rate of foodgrains production growth, leading to a decline in per capita production (and availability), the maximum decline being experienced by the Eastern region, while even the most dynamic and growing region, Punjab, experienced a decline after 1920.

These estimates have been sought to be challenged by Heston (1982) whose views have found a prominent place in the *Cambridge Economic History of India*. Heston's methodology however has been subjected to sharp criticism by Habib (1985) and others since he *assumes* that yield per acre remained constant during the period 1857-1947, giving in justification M. Mukherji's "charmingly illogical" and super-nationalist view that '...It is somewhat difficult to believe in a continually declining sequence of per capita real income in as large, as varied and as great a country as India'. (p. 404)

Heston's estimates are not considered therefore to pose any serious challenge to the Blyn-Sivasubramanian results. The estimated decline in per capita foodgrains production by about a third from the peak reached before World War I, is also consistent with such information we have on the increasing incidence of rural wage labour and increasing social differentiation.²

During the four decades of Independence, India has roughly trebled total foodgrains output from around 50 m. tons in 1951 to 150 m. tons by 1983-84, a level which has not been exceeded to date. This is a qualitative break from the pre-Independence trend of stagnation: in this sense the achievement has been considerable. In terms of per capita production however, the picture is disappointing in that the back log of decline has not been made up. Per capita availability of cereals during the last quinquennium for which data are available, 1981 to 1985, is only 17.6 per cent higher than during 1951 to 1955 while availability of foodgrains is only 9.9 more. We are thus not even as yet, at the same level as at the end of World War I. The per capita production and availability of pulses has been declining, as is well known, when added on to cereals to give the total foodgrains we find near-constancy between 1961-65 and 1981-85 at around 166 to 168 kg. per capita, with a dip to around 156 kg in the mid-seventies. Thus, not only has per capita foodgrains availability registered disappointingly small improvement, its nutritional balance has worsened with a fairly sharp fall in the intake of pulses, the main source of protein for the rural poor (Table 1).

It is interesting to note that while per capita cereals production has registered a distinct *rise* during the decade 1976-1985 over previous levels, for the first time since Independence per capita availability is actually lower than per capita production, the difference being accounted for mainly by increased addition to Government stocks (while exports have also been a small positive amount). This can be inferred to be basically an outcome of increased skewness in the distribution of sales, a larger proportion now

Table 1
ANNUAL PRODUCTION AND AVAILABILITY PER CAPITA OF FOOD
GRAINS, 1951-1985 (QUINQUENNIAL AVERAGE).

<i>Period</i>	<i>Average population m</i>	<i>Average annual Availability of</i>		<i>Average annual cereals produced</i>	
		<i>Cereals kg.</i>	<i>Pulses kg.</i>	<i>Total kg</i>	<i>per capita, kg.</i>
1951-55	376 44	129.13	23 59	152.72	122.74
1956-60	414 78	135 93	24.84	160.77	121 48
1961-65	452 24	146.32	22.12	168.44	135.02
1966-70	515.74	140.94	17.78	158.72	129.83
1971-75	597 10	140.54	15 47	156.01	135.48
1976-80	645-94	145.79	15.63	161.42	147.13
1981-85	720 42	151.95	14.34	166.29	153 39

Source From annual data in Economic Survey 1986-87 and Economic Survey 1969-70

coming from the well-to-do surplus producers in rural areas representing the capitalist tendency. In short, those who need to eat more because they are at or below the minimum, cannot afford to do so, and those who do not need to eat more, supply most of the commoditised part of output. The fact that the rural sector is unable to absorb increased production owing to lack of purchasing power, gets reflected in availability lower than production (This is borne out by data on the trends in the rural real wage bill, which we discuss later)

Levels of per capita net production and availability of 160 to 170 kg per annum are insufficient for meeting minimum nutritional requirements when income distribution is highly skewed, though they would just suffice perhaps in a situation of completely egalitarian distribution. These levels compare unfavourably, moreover with foodgrains production and availability in a more populous country, China, though China has a far more egalitarian rural income distribution. Like India, China too has trebled total foodgrains output since Liberation, by a somewhat earlier date. 358 m. tons was produced in 1983 compared to 112.3 m. tons in 1951. A peak production level of 376 m. tons (excluding tubers) was reached in 1984, and while this has come down to 350 and 360 m. tons in the subsequent two years, these 'trough' levels represent a per capita net adjusted availability from domestic production which is 40 per cent higher

than in India, and gave 282 kg. compared to 20 kg per capita in India. Remember, we are comparing here the Indian peak output of 1983-84 to the Chinese trough output of 1985. Comparing peak to peak, the gap is wider, with a 50 per cent higher per capita output in China compared to India. All these figures moreover exclude the production of potatoes, which is regarded as notionally part of 'foodgrains' in China, with 5 kg. potatoes being equated to a kilogram of grain in the statistics. Since China produced over 100 m. tons of potatoes by the early eighties (compared to hardly 10 m. tons in India), its inclusion in 'foodgrains' at the stated conversion rate naturally increases the gap between the two countries substantially to around 85% higher gross 'foodgrains' availability in China relative to India by 1984.

In the eighties the gap between the two countries has been widening, as the data in Table 2 indicates for China has been expanding foodgrains production at a more rapid rate than India while keeping population growth to half the Indian rate. There is not only no overall problem of food supply any longer in China: a larger portion of output is not consumed directly but converted to animal proteins, giving a nutritionally more balanced diet

Table 2
ESTIMATED FOODGRAINS PRODUCTION IN INDIA AND CHINA,
1951, 1981 and 1985

<i>A</i> <i>Foodgrains</i> <i>Only</i>	<i>1951</i>		<i>1981</i>			
	<i>India</i> (1)	<i>China</i> (2)	<i>Ratio of India</i> (2) to (1)		<i>China</i> (2)	<i>Ratio of</i> (2) to (1)
Area, m ha.	96.00	109.11	1.14	128.80	106.00	0.82
Output, m. ton	54.92	108.77	1.98	133.30	253.22	1.90
Output/ha, kg	572.08	995.82	1.74	1034.94	2388.84	2.31
Output/capita, kg	144.52	193.19	1.33	193.10	254.75	1.32
<i>B</i> <i>Foodgrains</i> <i>+Tubers</i>	<i>1981</i>					
	<i>India</i> (1)	<i>China</i> (2)	<i>Ratio of</i> (2) to (1)			
Area, m ha.	129.57	116.47	0.90			
Output, m. ton	135.29	278.22	2.05			
Output/ha; kg.	1044.15	2388.74	2.29			
Output/capita, kg	195.99	279.60	1.43			

<i>Foodgrains Only</i>	1985		<i>Ratio of (2) to (1)</i>	<i>Change, 1985 over 1981 as per cent of 1981</i>	
	<i>India (1)</i>	<i>China (2)</i>		<i>India</i>	<i>China</i>
Output, m tons	150.47	295.55	1.96	12.88	16.72
Output/capita, kg.	200.38	282.45	1.41	3.77	10.87
<i>Foodgrains + Tubers</i>					
Output, m tons	152.61	324.35	2.12	12.80	16.58
Output/capita, kg	203.24	309.97	1.53	3.70	10.74

Source Nai Ruenn Chen (1966) Chinese Economic Statistics and annual Communiques of the State Statistical Bureau of the PRC. For India, Economic Survey, various issues

Note 'Foodgrains only' The Chinese gross production figures have been adjusted downwards by (a) excluding tubers and (b) converting paddy rice to rice. However Soyabean has not been excluded as nutritionally it plays a similar role as pulses in India. Soybean in 1985 was below 3 per cent of foodgrain output in China. 'Foodgrains + tubers' Potato production figures have been added on to grain in both countries using the conversion rate of 5 kg tubers=1 kg grain

The initial position at Independence in India and at Liberation in China, was however very similar with respect to the problems of poverty, surplus labour and an inadequate industrial base; underemployment of rural labour was indeed more acute in China, with a much lower availability of cultivable land per capita at the end of a much longer history of settled agriculture than in India. The industrial base was also weaker, with coal mining constituting the only sector with a larger production than India in 1949. However in one respect China was ahead, namely, in more intensive cultivation and substantially higher initial yields than India. Thus even in 1951 the per hectare foodgrains yield works out to nearly double the Indian level. In the course of the last 35 years, China has however raised yields at a faster rate than India, so that at present the gap is over two to one in China's favour and this despite substantial achievement in India with regard to raising yields in particular crops following adoption of Borlaug varieties. While the overall foodgrains growth rates in the two countries are similar (as KN Raj stressed often), China has in fact accomplished a more difficult task in raising yields faster starting from an initially higher base. The economic imperative behind China's reliance primarily on raising yields comes from the absolute shortage of cultivable land owing

to topography and latitude, despite a larger geographical area than India. Thus in 1981 the total cultivated area under foodgrains in China was only 106 m ha compared to 129 m.ha in India though total foodgrains output was double India's.

Table 3
REAL EXPENDITURE PER CAPITA ON FOODGRAINS, 1970-85

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population M</i>	<i>Per cap. real consumption Exp. (1970-71 prices) Rs</i>		<i>Proportion of Cereals in All-food expenditure</i>
		<i>Cereals</i>	<i>All food</i>	
1970-71	541	159.0	351.5	45.23
1978-79	649	156.9	349.5	44.83
1979-80	664	126.1	339.9	37.10
1908-81	679	160.5	357.6	44.88
1981-82	694	152.8	353.9	43.18
1982-83	709	144.9	344.0	42.12
1983-84	724	164.0	357.7	43.65
1984-85	739	151.4	365.8	41.39
1985-86	754	—	—	—

Source National Accounts Statistics pp. 36-37 The private final consumption expenditure in the domestic market by products has been used to obtain per capita values

It is important to analyse in detail our giant neighbour's better agricultural performance. To offer the single-word answer—'Socialism'—is tempting as well as true, but is inadequate nevertheless for many socialist economies are known for their lagging agricultural performance. Given the sheer scale of the unemployment and poverty problems faced by China, the fact that solutions have been found is a source of encouragement for us in India, while at the same time there is a sense of time running out, of an increasing distance which we have to cover. A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this paper but it is evident that the irrigation strategy has played a major role. By concentrating on expanding the irrigated portion of cultivated area rapidly, mainly through a very large number of small to medium-scale water conservation projects executed collectively by mobilising underemployed labour, and by developing indigenously researched crop varieties, China has succeeded in raising yields on wet lands to very near world maximum levels. Two-thirds of the gross foodgrains output of 400 m,

tons is produced on an irrigated area of 44.65 m ha. This is an indicator of the immense potential which lies untapped in our own country. The 50 m ha of irrigated area in our country is potentially capable of producing at least 250 m ton of foodgrains. In this sense there is a larger technical 'slack' in the agrarian sector in India today; the imperative need is to explore the institutional and organisational framework within which this potential can be realised. We will return to the question of the conditions under which intensification of cultivation can potentially take place, in a later section.

Uneven Development under Landlord Capitalism

The strategy of agrarian change in India since Independence can be described broadly as a conservative land reform aimed at inducing landlords to convert themselves into capitalists, without seriously challenging their monopoly over land and other resources. This strategy was the logical outcome of the historic compromise reached by the Indian bourgeoisie with the landed interest, expressed in the denotion of land reform as a state-level subject to be legislated by the state legislature. No doubt in the last 35 years, there has been a curbing of the more blatant excesses of large-scale feudal exploitation, a simplification of many-layered intermediary tenures into one, or two, and some two to five per cent of total cultivated area has been acquired by the states for distribution to those who could afford to purchase, namely the rich peasant owner-cum-tenants. But the effective concentration of land and other resources remains in the hands of the new landlords and capitalists, comprising predominantly the old rentiers at the village level, turning capitalist; upwardly mobile rich peasants giving up participation in labour with enrichment, with a small leavening of urban entrants. It should be clear that by 'landlord' we mean an economic, not a juridical category: any proprietor of a substantial area of land and other means of production, who appropriates surplus without participating in labour, mainly on the basis of his control over landed property (which permits the employment of the labour of others) qualifies as a 'landlord' on this conception.

The outstanding characteristic of the strategy of promoting landlord capitalism, is that it constrains growth by confining investment in productivity raising techniques to an excessively narrow social stratum in the village. Only in the regions where historically, a substantial middle and rich peasantry has existed, with the landlord element constituting only part of the capitalist tendency, do we find any noticeable trend of rising private investment and productivity. This is the case in the Punjab-Haryana region, which historically had a higher-than-average farm size, a comparatively unpolarised class structure with a low proportion of labourers, and a substantial segment of well-to-do middle and rich peasants unconstrained by the rent barrier. It is also the case in those former zamindari areas where well-to-do peasants have gained from land reform,

Elsewhere, in regions of highly polarised class structures landlord capitalism has been unable to effect a productive transformation. The second outstanding feature of this socially narrowly-based trend of landlord capitalism is that it preserves and utilises the servile, customary caste-based relations in the village for its own ends. Caste-based segmentation of the labouring class and small peasantry and its cultural and ideological domination by the high-caste landlords continues to prevail everywhere except perhaps a few tiny pockets with a history of peasant uprisings, or organised resistance.

It is a much-discussed commonplace by now that growth in agriculture displays unevenness and hence, concentration at multiple levels: a crop-wise regionwise and social-class wise concentration has been emerging. What is remarkable is the speed with which this process of concentration is taking place, and the endemic character of the social discontent which has been generated and is expressing itself in various disturbing forms. We will take up first the most easily quantifiable element of uneven development, namely the increasing regional concentration of output growth.

(a) Stagnation in South and West India versus Growth in the North

If we look at the major food crops viz. wheat and rice production figures by States, it appears that for the last few years (to be precise, from 1981-82 to 1985-86) the whole of India south of the Vindhyas, and adding to this Gujarat and Rajasthan, have been in the grip of stagnation. (Table 4). Adding up the wheat and rice output figures for the seven concerned states, viz, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu, we find that they collectively register 26.4 m. tons in 1981-82, a good crop year only 26.8 m tons in 1983-84 which was a peak production year in the country as a whole. Output falls to 24.5 m tons in 1984-85 and further to 22.9 m tons in 1985-86. Taking two year moving averages gives the following:

Annual	1981-83	1982-84	1983-85	1984-86
Output,				
m ton	24.90	25.14	25.64	23.66

While Gujarat and Rajasthan have been affected by drought for more than one successive year, excluding these states still gives us a trend of stagnation for the whole of South India. Each individual state in the group shows either stagnation or slight decline in output over the period. Considering the size of the territory and population involved, this is a serious situation. It is not surprising that we find a steady and sharp decline in the proportionate contribution by these seven states to total major food-grains output, from 29.15 percent in 1981-82 to 25.4 per cent two years later and only 20.59 percent by 1985-86. (Table 4),

In sharp contrast to stagnation in peninsular India, North India has been booming. The total major food crops output from three states, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, has risen from 35.9 m tons in 1981-82 to 42 m tons two years later and 48 m. tons by 1985-86. The two year moving averages are as follows :

Annual	1981-83	1982-84	1983-85	1984-86
Output				
m ton	37.86	41.08	43.09	45.93

The weight of these three states in total major food crops production has risen from 39.57 per cent in 1981-82 to 43.14 per cent by 1985-86, remarkably high considering the size of the territory and population involved.

The Eastern region has also shown a good growth performance during this period. The states of Assam, Bihar, Orissa and W. Bengal together produced 19 m tons. of major foodgrains in 1981-82, which had risen to 25 m tons by 1985-86. Adding on the Eastern region output to the Northern region's, we obtain the following with two-year moving averages :

Annual	1981-83	1982-84	1983-85	1984-86
Output				
m. ton	55.79	61.82	67.48	70.96

Taking the total foodgrains output now and retaining the same grouping of states as above, we find that the contribution of the stagnating seven states *declines* from 50 m tons in 1981-2 to 44 m tons in 1985-86, with a peak production of 53 m. tons in 1983-4. The share in total foodgrains output from this stagnating region shows a steady decline from 37.7 per cent in 1981-2 to 35.0 in the peak year of 1983-4 to 29.2 per cent in 1985-6. The share of the triple alliance by contrast, (Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh) has risen from 32.95 per cent in 1981-82 to 37.5 per cent by 1985-86. Thus the three northern states alone today contribute considerably more to aggregate foodgrains output than the seven states covering the whole of peninsular and Western India, put together. (Table 5).

Table 4
ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF WHEAT AND RICE BY GROUPS
OF STATES 1981-82 TO 1985-86 (M. TONS)

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Group I (North)					
(a) Wheat	24.984	28.762	29.701	30.272	32.732
(b) Rice	10.903	11.067	12.637	13.571	15.282
Sub-Total	35.887	39.829	42.332	43.843	48.014
Percent of Total	(39.57)	(44.30)	(40.10)	(42.81)	(43.24)
Group II (South and West)					
(a) Wheat	5.952	6.439	6.624	5.580	5.776
(b) Rice	20.489	17.020	20.189	18.888	17.086
Sub-Total	26.441	23.459	26.813	24.468	22.862
Percent of Total	(29.15)	(26.05)	(25.40)	(23.89)	(20.59)
Group III (Rest of India)					
(a) Wheat	6.516	17.593	9.151	8.217	8.337
(b) Rice	21.856	19.029	27.271	25.077	31.785
Sub-Total	28.372	26.422	36.422	34.094	40.022
All India					
(a) Wheat	37.452	42.794	45.476	54.069	46.885
(b) Rice	53.248	47.116	60.097	58.336	64.153
Total	90.700	89.910	105.57	102.405	111.038
Percent	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)

Note Group I—Punjab, Haryana, U P

Group II—Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil-nadu.

Group III—All-India less Group I and II

Table 5

 TRIENNIAL AVERAGE FOODGRAINS OUTPUT BY GROUPS OF
STATES, 1974-1985 (000 TONS)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Gp I</i>	<i>Gp II</i>	<i>Gp III</i>	<i>All-India</i>
1974-75 to 1976-77	31,818.0	41,331.6	37,526.1	110,675.8
1977-78 to 1979-80	37,138.6	43,882.9	41,648.3	122,669.7
1980-81 to 1982-83	44,608.8	46,233.2	39,958.7	130,800.7
1983-84 to 1985-86	53,242.7	47,868.8	48,349.1	149,460.6

Percentage Share in Total Foodgrains Output

	<i>Gp I</i>	<i>Gp II</i>	<i>Gp III</i>	<i>All India</i>
1974-74 to 1976-77	28.75	37.34	33.91	100.0
1977-78 to 1979-80	30.28	35.77	33.95	100.0
1980-81 to 1982-83	34.10	35.35	30.55	100.0
1983-84 to 1985-86	35.62	32.03	32.35	100.0

Group I Punjab, Haryana, U P.

Group II Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu.

Group III, All-India less Groups I and II.

Per cent Change over Previous Triennium

<i>Period</i>	<i>G I</i>	<i>Gp II</i>	<i>Gp III</i>	<i>All India</i>
1974-75 to 1976-77	—	—	—	—
1977-78 to 1979-80	16 72	6 17	10 98	10.83
1980-81 to 1982-83	20 11	5 08	—4 06	6 63
1983-84 to 1985-86	19 35	3 54	20 99	14 26
1974-75 to 1985-86	67.33	15 81	28 84	35 04

Source Annual Data in Economic Surveys, various years

The implications in terms of per capita foodgrains production are clear, given positive population growth rates in all regions. The whole of peninsular and Western India has witnessed a fall in per capita food production at the same time that the all-India average was rising owing to a more than average rise in Northern and Eastern India.

It may be argued that the time-period we have taken is rather short and the picture may be different with a longer period. Let us look at the twelve years beginning 1974-5 and ending 1985-6, and aggregate the state-wise total foodgrains production data according to the same regional groupings, as before. The annual data are then aggregated taking three-year periods beginning 1974-75. What we have designated as the stagnating region, shows a rise in output from 41.3 m tons annual average during the first triennium to 47.8 m tons during the fourth triennium or a less than 16 per cent rise. The dynamic region of Northern India however shows a rise from 31.8 m tons in the first triennium to 53.2 m tons in the fourth, or a 67 per cent rise. The rest of India shows a rise of 29 per cent, close to the all India average of 35 per cent over the decade.

The share of the dynamic region in total foodgrain production shows a steady rise over the successive triennia from 28.7 to 35.6 per cent. The share of the stagnating region records decline from 37.3 to 32 per cent. And the share of the rest of India declines marginally from 33.9 to 32.4 per cent. The remarkable picture revealed by Table 5 is that, the region with the lowest initial weight in total foodgrains production of the three regions, today has the highest weight, while the region with the highest initial weight constituted by the seven states of peninsular and Western India, has today the lowest weight in total foodgrains production.

Our preliminary exercises in looking at trends in region-wise concentration of production may be elementary, finer and more discriminating grouping can no doubt be carried out but these exercises do serve the purpose of delineating the important trends. More sophisticated statistical analysis based on measuring the distance between groups of states is likely to confirm the obvious, namely that not only is there significant distance between the regions but the distance has been increasing over time. Whatever explanations we seek to put forward for this remarkable picture of increasing regional concentration, a very important component must be the question of investment in and utilisation of irrigation. We will return to this after briefly considering class-wise concentration.

6 The increasing distance between social classes under the landlord capitalist path of agrarian change.

The extensive discussions on "the agriculture-manufacturing terms of trade" have, in the very way the question has been posed, served as something of a theoretical red herring by deflecting a class perspective on agrarian change, into a conventional 'economic sectors' perspective. No doubt there is such a thing as 'improving terms of trade for agriculture', as a statistical concept of changes in a ratio of price indices. But all too often this is implicitly thought of as 'an improvement in the economic position of the agriculturist' while a deterioration in the agriculture-manufacturing terms of trade is implicitly thought of as 'a worsening of the position of the agriculturist'.

The reality, of course, is that in the process of endemic generalised inflation 'improving terms of trade' for the agricultural sector is compatible with a sharp worsening of the economic position of the mass of the commodity-buyers and sellers of labour-power who make up the bulk of the rural population, combined with enrichment of a minority of commodity sellers who account for the bulk of the commoditised portion of output (inaccurately termed the 'marketed surplus'). 'Deteriorating terms of trade' for agriculture is quite compatible with continued enrichment of the commodity selling minority if it is able to cut costs by squeezing the real wage bill or tenant's share of net output. In either situation the income distribution worsens. (For all the lip service paid to the need to develop fractile-specific terms of trade, the entire perspective of the discussion inevitably settles into viewing the question in terms which aggregate in an illegitimate fashion, diametrically opposite economic-social categories into that fictional entity, 'the average cultivator').

It is a more accurate conceptualisation of the actual economic processes involved to look upon the inflationary tendency as representing essentially a profit inflation (or more generally, a surplus inflation) where the movement of sectoral 'terms of trade' becomes relevant only with respect to the sectoral allocation of surplus and with respect to the extent of the squeeze on the peasantry. In short the relative income position of the mass of rural producers (labourers, poor peasants and small

peasants) tends to worsen both when terms of trade are shifting in favour of and against 'agriculture', for the surplus appropriating classes invariably succeed in passing on most if not the entire burden of deteriorating terms of trade to them, while keeping the benefits of improvement by virtue of monopolising commodity sales. From the end of the second Plan period we have witnessed endemic inflation with a seven-fold rise in prices from 1960 to date. Since only a tiny fraction of the working class proper is unionised and strong enough to obtain adequate indexation of earnings, the process of price inflation can be broadly called one of profit inflation, or more generally surplus-inflation.

The *direction of movement* of intersectoral terms of trade is important however in determining the *nature and extent* of the adverse impact of the rural masses. When agricultural prices were rising faster than manufactured goods prices between 1963 and 1975 (Thamarajakshi's estimates of terms of trade show a 30 per cent shift in agriculturists' favour with base 1960), the real earnings of rural labour predictably registered a sharp decline. A comparison of the 1974-75 Rural Labour Enquiry findings with those of 1963-65 Enquiry, shows that male real wage rates on an all-India basis fell by nearly one-third and female by nearly half. Since annual days employed also declined by about 5 per cent, real earnings to that extent declined even more than real wage rates. Had we the relevant class-specific vital rates we would undoubtedly have found a rise in female infanticide in morbidity amongst rural labour in this period. The poor peasants who are net commodity buyers must also have lost out. On the other hand the commodity-selling peasants gained with the greatest gains being registered by the landlord capitalists.

Since the mid-seventies, the relative sectoral price trends have been reversed, a faster rate of rise of manufactured goods prices compared to agricultural prices (Kahlon and Tyagi's estimates show a 13 per cent shift against agriculture by 1980 over 1975 with the triennial ending 1971-2 as base) has generalised the crisis of declining real earnings to the small and middle peasantry, while entailing a squeeze on the surplus profits to which the capitalist landlords have become accustomed.³ In this context it must be remembered that there are very *large variations in unit costs* of production of a given crop across regions and across groups of cultivators; those producers representing the capitalist tendency who have *succeeded in lowering unit costs through productivity raising investment, and those regions where such capitalist investment has taken place extensively, enjoy in effect a differential rent compared to the smaller-scale producers and the regions where such production still predominates*. Thus a wheat procurement price of Rs. 152 per quintal in 1985 gave a surplus profit of at least Rs. 30 per quintal to the average producer in Punjab (higher for the large-scale producers) over and above a 'cost' of Rs. 119 per quintal which included imported interest and rent. The very same price however would barely cover even paid-out costs alone for a medium scale producer in Bihar

It is not surprising that while the decade from the mid sixties was marked by growing immiserisation of rural labour and by urban protest against rapid food price inflation, the subsequent decade has seen, on the contrary, an appeasement of urban discontent through the relative check on food price rise (combined with more frequent indexation of white-color and organised industrial earnings) on the one hand, and the new phenomenon on the other hand of farmers' agitations for higher prices, which started in Karnataka and Maharashtra and has spread to Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The fact that such agitations may be *led* by the capitalist landlords and rich peasants wishing to maintain their profits, does not negate the objective reality of the generalisation of economic distress in the rural sector to include now not only rural labour and poor peasants but also small and middle peasants, who provide the mass support for these agitations. Even in the case of an advanced region like Haryana, our class-wise analysis of farm economics data relating to 1972-73 had shown that 60 per cent of the 242 cultivators operating below 15-acre holding, failed to obtain an income sufficient for poverty-level consumption)

The National Accounts statistics reveal a picture which is consistent with surplus inflation in rural areas, during precisely the period when 'terms of trade' were moving against agriculture, viz 1978 to 1986. The extent of surplus inflation is understated since a great many rich peasants and landlords claim to be engaged in so-called 'self-cultivation' when in fact they exclusively employ labourers and tenants. The category 'mixed income of the self-employed' thus contains a substantial element of surplus. The total of property incomes recorded as such, viz. profit, rent and interest in the total income generated in the primary sector has risen steadily from 8.7 per cent in 1978-79 to 12.5 per cent in 1984-85. The secondary sector also displays a rise in the share of surplus, from 28.3 per cent to 30.9 per cent over the same period. Conversely the share of 'compensation to employees' in total incomes registers a fall.

The current values of 'compensation of employees' in the primary sector shows a 286 per cent rise in 1984-85 over 1970, when the wholesale price index and the consumer price index for agriculture labourers register a 359 per cent and 340 per cent rise respectively and all implicit deflator. series also show a larger rise than the wage bill. Between 1978-79 and 1984-85 the current value goes up only by 67.6 per cent while the WPI and CPIAL rise by 80 per cent and 89 per cent. Whichever deflator we use, therefore, the real value of the wage-bill in the primary sector has fallen. At the same time not only the absolute but the relative share of rural labourers in the work force has been rising. A contracting pool of income being shared out amongst growing numbers, is the picture which emerges. Analysis of state-wise incomes would no doubt show that the largest declines have occurred in the stagnating areas of peninsular and west India with an increase also in underemployment of labour. It is hardly surprising that not only is the mass market in rural areas for manufactured

goods constituted by the poorer six deciles of the population stagnant, even foodgrains absorption appears to have been adversely affected.

Employment data from the 38th Round of the NSSO relating to 1983, reinforces the dismal picture when compared with the earlier Rounds in 1972-73 and 1977-78. Of all male workers in rural areas the percentage reporting unemployment has slowly risen under every head of employment status (usual status, weekly status and daily status)

The consumption expenditure data from the national accounts statistics have been divided through by population in Table 3 and indicate that in real terms, per capita cereal consumption value remained constant during 1970-71 to 1985-86, real expenditure on 'all food' per capita registered a marginal rise, and the proportion of expenditure on 'food' registers a small decline. The last finding has been interpreted widely as an Engel effect; this is of course quite correct provided it is not taken to imply a rise in the general standard of life. On the contrary, what is happening is a contraction-cum stagnation in the incomes per capita of labourers and poor peasants making up at least 60 per cent of population, which restrains their food consumption even though their intake is nutritionally inadequate; combined with a rise in the real incomes of the propertied minority, which since its food consumption is already at saturation level, spends a lower portion of its higher income, on food. The Engel effect operates for this minority, which accounts for a substantial share of total food expenditure and thus affects the aggregate picture.

It will be noted that all the observations we have made so far relate to macroeconomic indicators from which some inferences can be drawn on income distribution, but there is no direct information for the incomes of individual social classes, for data are not collected by social class categories, other than for the class of rural labourers. The rural labour survey of 1974-75 compared to 1963-65 showed a decline in the real earnings per family owing to a combination of decline in real wage and a small fall in annual days employed, and a rise in real indebtedness. Given the background of output stagnation in a large part of the country combined with surplus inflation, we may expect that the real earning of rural labour would have declined further on average during 1974-75 to date, though it may be constant or rising slightly in the dynamic areas, with a sharper than average decline in the stagnating areas.

In principle we should be able to say much more detailed and precise things about what is happening to the employment and incomes of social classes in rural areas, for all the basic data are there in the NSS surveys. But, it would be no exaggeration to say that the NSSO collects and presents data on the most unscientific principles imaginable from the viewpoint of the social scientist (though not perhaps from the viewpoint of the statistician *simpliciter*). Owing to its unscientific principles, it is impossible to relate the land holding, employment and consumption data to each other in any meaningful way. The landholding data are collected in one round

and presented by acreage groups. The employment data are collected in another round and presented by employment status. The consumption data are collected in a separate round and presented according to per capita monthly expenditure groups. The characteristics of a single economic entity, say a poor peasant (who has inadequate landholding, therefore is under-employed and consumes little) are thus trifurcated and each characteristic is classified according to its own index. It is impossible to bring these together again and obtain a holistic view of the characteristics of the real-life entity called the poor peasant. (the analogy which is closest perhaps the following : suppose we are studying the population of all mammals. Data on the physical characteristics of the animals such as weight, height, hairiness, etc. are collected and grouped according to the own-index. Thus, we would have the height data by height groups, the weight data by weight groups, the hairiness data according to some index of hairiness group. From such a procedure it would be clearly impossible to isolate the characteristics of elephants as opposed to those of mice.)

This method of collecting and presenting data is a constant temptation to the social scientist to fall in the trap of illegitimate inferences. We do not know, for example, what precisely if any, is the intersection between (a) the top two deciles of households ranked by per capita monthly expenditure levels, (b) the top two deciles of households ranked by area operated, (c) the top two deciles of households ranked by asset value, (d) the class of capitalist landlords in rural areas. It would be quite illegitimate to assume that there exists such a large intersection between these quite different sets of households that they can be taken to be identical for all practical purposes. yet scholars are constantly making this illegitimate assumption.

The point about non-intersection is by no means trivial. We have undertaken a lengthy analysis with farm economics data from Haryana to show that ranking by acreage operated is not synonymous with ranking according to degree of use of hired labour. According to the first ranking, large farmers have lower yield than small farmers. According to the second ranking we find that hired labour based farmers have higher yield than family labour based farmers. Yet the identity of the two sets—large acreage farmers, and hired labour farmers—had been quite illegitimately taken for granted by all (except a handful familiar with Marxist literature).

To sum up : while many of us analysing the macro-economic trends in the Indian economy and more specifically its agrarian sector have predicted in the past a worsening of income distribution, the speed with which this is happening and the endemic character of the stagnation affecting a large part of the country which is rapidly falling behind the rest, is certainly something of a surprise. The seriousness of the situation entails a correspondingly serious exploration of possible strategies for counter-acting these trends. Though we have no cut-and-dried answers, one obvious avenue of exploration is co-operative irrigation and soil conservation measures.

Institutional requirements of effective irrigation and conservation

In India the two agencies of investment in irrigation have been respectively the Government which plans and executes with public funds the large and medium scale irrigation projects ; and private investors in rural areas, who under the present strategy constitute a tiny minority of landlords and rich peasants with the required funds to put into tubewell irrigation. Investment under both heads and especially the second has grown more rapidly in the last 40 years than in the preceding century. But, the scale of transformation of the rural productive base is simply insufficient, while various deleterious effects on the environment of large-scale projects which have involved deforestation are increasingly becoming evident. This is where China's experience can become relevant.

It is well known that 40 years ago, the position in China was considerably worse than in India with regard to destruction of forest cover and degradation of soils ; we are however rapidly approaching, though we have not yet quite reached the initial 'Chinese point'. While much remains still to be done, the Chinese have succeeded in reversing the trend of deterioration through a massive drive for afforestation, terracing of hillsides and through an enormously large number of locally conceived and executed water-conservation projects. This drive was concentrated between 1958 and 1975, after the formation of the communes. We have argued elsewhere, 'Three Communes and a Production Brigade: the Contract Responsibility System in China,'⁴ that the institutional structure of the commune and its egalitarian remuneration system which guaranteed basic needs, served to mobilise surplus labour at little extra cost on a massive scale for capital formation projects. Each worker was guaranteed subsistence but asked to work more for no immediate reward but in anticipation of higher collective and hence individual incomes. Politicisation of the peasantry was an essential element of their acceptance of the social dislocation involved in such an unprecedented drive for 'primitive accumulation'. The production base was transformed, with the construction of 46,000 irrigation reservoirs-during the period with a total capacity of 400 billion cu ft water (the average size thus works out to 8.695 m cu ft. per reservoir), which raised the proportion of cultivated area under irrigation to nearly 50 per cent. (This is of course very unequally distributed, with many communes enjoying 100 per cent irrigation while locationally less favoured ones have lower-than average irrigation). Collective labour was also put into terracing, soil-conservation and afforestation.

While the institutional structure of private property in India clearly implies that no such productive transformation of the agrarian economy is possible within the existing matrix of social relations, nevertheless the sharply deteriorating position of the rural poor requires measures which are feasible even within this system. The only way that total immiserisation can be counteracted is by cooperative investment for raising the level of productive forces by the small peasant and poor peasants, even if land

remains in private ownership and continues to be individually operated. This type of cooperative investment can serve to fill the yawning gap that exists at present between the giant state-financed irrigation and hydel projects on the one hand, and the capitalist landlord's tubewells on the other. It can in part revive the centuries-old systems of irrigation which used to be maintained in the past on the basis of the collective labour of the village, but which have been allowed to fall into disuse with the privatisation of investment at the local level. It is reported that tanks, which were an important source of irrigation in South India are silting up and in the absence of any appropriate institution for their maintenance, deteriorating as an effective irrigation source. The ancient *ahar-pyne* system of irrigation in South Bihar which consisted in damming small streams and using the water through an extensive network of channels, all maintained in the past with collective labour has similarly fallen into disuse.

If the small and poor peasantry are to collectively invest in irrigation, it is of course necessary that they should collectively own the asset created. Working for wages to construct a minor irrigation project whose benefits are then appropriated by the big landholders, will simply serve to perpetuate and increase income inequalities.

The fact that cooperative investment in irrigation is feasible and does raise the incomes of participants substantially, is borne out by the isolated examples of such investment which we encounter. Labourers in a village in Baroda allotted some barren plots out of 'surplus' land, spontaneously decided to operate the plots jointly, and pooled their individually meagre funds to grow orchard crops. In a village in Cuttack district in Orissa a community dug-well scheme has been in operation, on the basis of joint investment by small peasants. We find that these peasants have been able to engage in intensive vegetables cultivation putting in hitherto under utilised family labour and have raised incomes to levels nearly comparable with those of rich peasants.⁵

The contention that unless the distribution of property is radically altered, small peasant cooperation by itself will be unable either to transform the productive base or to maintain itself against the interests of the powerful landlord capitalists, is substantially correct. On the other hand, a new society is not created overnight, experimentation with new social forms within the old society establish both a model of change, and underline the limitations of the model within the existing matrix of social relations.

The Agrarian Problem and the Question of Nationhood

Imperialist exploitation created an awareness of an Indian nation, which subsumed the diverse nationalities with their distinct languages and sub-cultures. Whatever contradictions there might exist between high-caste and low-caste, Hindu and Muslim, were also sought to be transcended in the course of the struggle led by the pan-Indian bourgeoisie, which held out the hope not only of an Independent but a reformed India,

It is in the interest of the bourgeoisie to pursue unity and extend the territorial and economic space within which it operates. The bourgeois leadership of the freedom movement in undivided India had as its dominant ideology an opposition to theocratism, to religious fundamentalism, and the advocacy of secular, democratic values. These are no doubt the standard requirements of a modern nation-state, but they acquire especial significance in the context of the objective existence of religious, linguistic and cultural pluralism in India where only a small fraction of the population had in fact internalised this progressive ideology fully. The absence of a strong bourgeois element within the Muslims of India formed the objective basis for the first setback in the unity of the Indian people—the demand for and creation of a state on the basis of religion, Pakistan.

The strategy of capitalist industrialisation sought to be followed in India after Independence, we have characterised, as regards agriculture, as the less revolutionary, long drawn out, painful and slow path of Junker style agrarian capitalism of the landlords with whom the monopoly bourgeoisie compromised and allied itself. There was no seizure of the landlords' land without compensation and redistribution to the land-hungry poor and small peasants in rural areas (as had taken place not only in revolutionary China and North Korea, but also in more attenuated form in other East Asian countries successfully industrialising today—viz Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan). The militant anti-landlord peasant movements in India led by Communists, (in Telengana, Kerala and Bengal) were either directly suppressed or their thrust blunted by the victorious bourgeoisie' promise of legislated reform. In practice the alliance entered into by the Indian bourgeoisie with the landlords implied the sabotaging of the programme of radical land reforms, in favour of the promotion of landlord capitalism.

Today land concentration in a few hands remains acute, and landlessness and poverty are almost as endemic as at Independence, but the social content of landlordism has changed. It is no longer the old-style feudal rentier lording it over a mass of tenants, but the capitalist landlord producing with an eye to the market and using hired labour, who dominates the villages in the economically advanced areas of the country. Because no thorough-going reform of the old agrarian relations has taken place, this development of capitalism bears all the hall-marks of a 'semi-feudal' capitalism—a perpetuation of upper-caste domination and discrimination against the lower-caste labouring classes, of servile personal relations, and debt-bondage of labourers. The ideology of the capitalist landlords moreover, forms a hegemonic ideology in rural areas particularly where democratic mass movements have been weak. This ideology expresses itself in anti-industrialism, against state intervention, in an assertion of the 'traditional' values of pristine 'Bharat' against the modernising efforts of the centralised state in industrialising 'India'. The resurgence of right-wing, agrarian radicalism which consciously poses 'Bharat' against 'India', and

carries within it both anarchist and reactionary elements, bears a family resemblance to the agrarian radicalism in interwar Japan (This resurgence has occurred under rather similar conditions of a deteriorating position for the mass of the peasants and labourers, which is utilised by the landed interest to serve its own ends given the false consciousness of the masses). It carries within it the potential for fascisization of the Indian polity (A recent rather bizarre manifestation has been the landlord dominated political parties' support for an incident of 'sati' or burning alive of a young widow on her husband's funeral pyre in a village in backward Rajasthan which attracted an audience of over 100,000 persons. Armed groups of the dominant landed caste of the area have prevented so far the approach of the police to implement the law against glorification of the criminal act).

The record of industrialisation in India has no doubt been fairly impressive: a wide range of industries including a comprehensive heavy industries base has been built up during the four decades of Independence. The process of financing the industrialisation effort has however, definitely involved a worsening of income distribution. This has arisen from the State's inability to tap through direct taxation the growing surpluses of the rural and urban capitalists, and its consequent heavy reliance on regressive indirect taxation and on inflation. The perpetuation of mass poverty and the resulting limitations on the growth of the domestic market has in turn affected industrial growth through the inadequate offtake of manufactured goods and manifests itself also in an excess supply of foodgrains at prevailing prices.

Extreme unevenness of growth generates its own problems for the nation, given the prevalence of numerous types of cultural contradictions, which were suppressed or transcended in the course of a common anti-imperialist struggle, but which acquire an ominous autonomy as the path of capitalist industrialisation under the aegis of the bourgeois landlord state runs into difficulties. The very foundation of a nation based on a union of nationalities can be threatened, and is threatened today primarily because of the extremely uneven character of capitalist development. This provides a new economic sub-soil for the growth of exclusiveness which manifests itself ideologically in religious fundamentalism or social reaction against minorities at the regional level. Development in a nation such as India is always poised along a knife-edge, for the question of the consciousness of a nationality has a dual aspect. The denial of the legitimate aspirations of any individual nationality in the interests of 'the nation' carries the danger of excessive centralisation and authoritarianism; on the other hand, an undue emphasis on the exclusive interests and demands of any individual nationality can serve to undermine the foundations of the nation. The delicate balance which is required in a union of nationalities can be all too easily disrupted in conditions of uneven growth. The fact the both unusual backwardness and unusual rapidity of development can be conducive to a disruption of the balance, is illustrated by Assam and Punjab which have

both witnessed the rise of secessionism

Assam is a region rich in natural resources but economically very backward, it has experienced a slow rate of economic expansion combined with a rapid rate of population expansion, a considerable part of which has been through immigration. The Assamese speaking people have reacted to their economic problems and to what they perceive as cultural swamping by the immigrants, with an exclusivist ideology which labels every non-Assamese speaker (including immigrants of long standing speaking two languages) a 'foreigner' and demands their expulsion; it, also talks of 'colonialism' by the Central Government in so far as Assam's oil is used by the Indian nation. There is hardly any indigenous Assamese manufacturing bourgeoisie; the ideology of the industrialising state of India is perceived as alien by the intellectuals articulating the predominantly agrarian and petty-producer consciousness which represents a typical right-wing radicalism. It combines an opposition to any centralised authority with fairly reactionary positions vis-à-vis other cultural-linguistic groups and the tribals who constitute a substantial section of the population.

In Punjab the origins of secessionist ideology and the terrorist movement against the Central Government, lie in the opposite (but dialectically same) phenomenon of extremely rapid agricultural growth which has made Punjab the most prosperous region of India even though the bases for industrial growth lie elsewhere. The roots of Punjab's agrarian prosperity go back to the turn of the century in the colonial era, when most of the irrigation investment undertaken by the imperialists was concentrated in this region. During the fifty years before Independence, Punjab which to start with had ranked far below Bengal with respect to agricultural productivity, rapidly overtook the latter and emerged as a wheat-exporting region. In the post-Independence period, Punjab has emerged not only with a disproportionately large contribution to the country's food output but, even more important, to the country-side's food surpluses serving to feed the non-rural population. The Central Government's procurement of food-grains stocks is heavily dependent on this region with its highly commercialised production: 60 percent of wheat and over 40 percent of rice procured is contributed by Punjab alone.

The burgeoning prosperity of Punjab's capitalist landlords and rich peasantry is buttressed by the considerable flow of remittances from Punjabis settled abroad, particularly in Canada, and U.K. This region (along with Gujarat) has been for many decades strongly linked to the capitalist world, and the link is directly from Punjab's villages and district towns. At the same time there is a disproportionately small manufacturing bourgeoisie, numerous small capitalists running textile units or transport concerns do not add up to a capitalist class comparable in any way to the monopoly bourgeoisie which dominates the industrial economy in India. In Punjab the alliance between the landlords and the manufacturing capitalists—an alliance which underlies the class constitution of the Indian state—has

always been dominated by the landed interest, and the ideology of capitalist modernisation has been heavily biased towards a species of agrarianism, serving primarily landlord interests. The landlord capitalists' growing economic power has generated in turn in a section, the aspiration for a greater measure of political power than it perceives to be possible within the 'constraints' of the Indian Union. The most extreme version of the demand for political power articulates itself in secessionism, i.e. the creation of a separate state of Khalistan; the more moderate version which stops short of secession, nevertheless asks for a degree of autonomy (all matters except defence and communications to be decided by the regional state) which effectively, would cut Punjab off from the Indian Union as an economic entity. There is little doubt that if these demands are ever permitted to be realised, the first action of the proposed state of the capitalist landlords would be to export food surpluses abroad for profit, rather than supply the public distribution system within India, the second action would be to permit military bases to be set up by a foreign capitalist power.

The religious garb of the movement for Khalistan in Punjab should not be allowed to obscure the basic class interests which underlie the movement. Sikhism had arisen as the religious expression of the revolt of the Jat peasantry against the Mughal Empire. Three centuries later, fundamentalist Sikhism has asserted itself as the somewhat improbable vehicle of the political aspirations of a section of the powerful capitalist landlords of Punjab, whose thirst for primitive accumulation remains unsatiated and who wish to manipulate directly the levers of state power for their own enrichment. On the other hand, the decades of the freedom struggle and of the growth of democratic movements has generated a new consciousness among the masses, who so far have remained on the whole quite remarkably impervious to religious demagoguery.

The agrarian problem of the transition to a nation in India can be summed up as follows: the failure to carry through a radical redistributive land reform, and the alliance entered into by the bourgeoisie with the landed interest, gives rise to a socially narrowly based and regionally highly uneven process of growth of capitalism in agriculture. Extreme unevenness of growth provides a fertile subsoil for the emergence of divisive and secessionist movements both in areas of extreme backwardness, where petty producers facing economic crises see the industrialising state as exploiting local resources without commensurate returns; and in areas of disproportionate rural prosperity, where those capitalist landlords, who do not subscribe to the aims of the national independent development, seek to link themselves directly to the world economy. A variety of reactionary movements ideologically expressing themselves in religious fundamentalism and in racial-cultural exclusivism rear their heads under such conditions. The task of the democratic movement is both to fight against the influence of these reactionary tendencies and to fight for the completion of the agrarian revolution.

*I.S. GULATI**

The Indian Federal Fiscal Model : A Case of Increasing Centralisation

The Formal Scheme

Under the Indian federal system—some dispute that the Indian system was ever fully federal and describe it as quasi-federal—basic to the matrix of financial relations between the Centre and the states are the provisions of the Indian Constitution providing for transfer of resources from the Centre to the states. Given the delimitation of responsibilities and functions, including the function of resource mobilization in various forms, as between the Centre and the states, and the resultant weakness of the states in regard to the access to resources relative to the responsibilities they shoulder, the Constitution makes various provisions enabling the transfer of resources from the Center to the states.

The rationale behind the approach of the Indian Constitution in regard to its financial provisions was put forth thus by the Sixth Finance Commission :

The heads of revenue and responsibilities were distributed on the basis of whether the Centre or the states was better equipped to deal with the particular head. It was however realised that the delimitation of resources and functions on this basis would call for appropriate corrective measures to bring about better correspondence between resources and responsibilities of the two tiers in our federal set up.

That is why, the Constitution embodies both mandatory and enabling provisions for facilitating a wide-ranging transfer of resources from the Centre to the states.

Briefly put, the Constitution envisages transfer of resources from the Centre to the States in the following forms :

- (1) Through the levy of certain duties imposed by the Centre but collected and appropriated by the states (Article 268 of the Constitution).
- (2) Through the levy by the Centre ; but assignment in whole to the

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states of the proceeds of certain taxes (Article 269 of the Constitution)

- (3) Through mandatory sharing of the proceeds of income tax on principles laid down by the Finance Commission (Article 270 of the Constitution)
- (4) Through sharing, on recommendation by the Finance Commission in the proceeds of Union excise duties (Article 272 of the Constitution)
- (5) Through statutory grants-in-aid, on recommendations by the Finance Commission (Article 275 of the Constitution).
- (6) Through grants for any public purpose (Article 282 of the Constitution).
- (7) Through loans for any purpose (Article 293 of the Constitution).

Finance Commissions' Role

The sequence in the above scheme of resource transfers to the states is significant in two respects. Firstly, the mechanism of resource transfers relies principally on instruments of tax sharing and statutory grants-in-aid and only marginally on other grants and Central loans for the purpose. This is borne out by the fact that items (6) and (7) do not appear in the section of the Indian Constitution dealing with the distribution of revenues between the Union and the state. Secondly, the Finance Commissions have been assigned a major role in the scheme of fiscal relations envisaged under the Indian Constitution. To quote the Seventh Finance Commission :

The meaning of the sequence is clear in that, firstly, the need of transfer of resources is recognised and made part of the Constitution, secondly, in the case of taxes which are to be divided or may be divided between the Centre and states, it is the Finance Commission which has to make recommendation in regard to the allocation of the respective shares between the Union on the one hand and the states on the other and also in regard to the principles for deciding the shares of the states *inter se*. The Commission has also to recommend the principles which should govern the grants-in-aid to the states under Article 275. These two duties are mandatory.

The Seventh Finance Commission goes on to elaborate what freedom a Finance Commission enjoys, in its judgement, in regard to matters which the Constitution enjoins upon this body to consider and make recommendations on.

While the Commission's discretion in the matter of making recommendations on these matters (i.e. those which come within its purview under the Constitution) is not limited in the Constitution, it also seems clear that the Commission has little discretion to make transfers

beyond the scheme of the Constitution. (Parenthesis ours)

Planning Commission's Emergence

It should be noted however that while the financial scheme envisaged in the Indian Constitution relied considerably on the Finance Commission, to be appointed by the President every five years or earlier, to draw up the principles governing the transfer of resources from the Centre to the states, the Constitution did at the same time allow scope for resource transfers that did not fall within the Finance Commission's ambit. The latter could take the form not only of loans but also grants. In fact, as is widely accepted the Planning Commission, a body whose role as a conduit of resource transfers from the Centre to the states was not quite foreseen by framers of the Indian Constitution and which, as things stand today, is appointed by the Centre under its executive powers, has, right from the beginning (i.e. since the early '50s), acted as a very major channel for resource transfers from the Centre to the states.

The share of resource transfers effected in pursuance of the awards of the Finance Commission—they are referred to the hereafter as statutory transfers—in the aggregate budgetary transfers from the Centre to the states peaked only in the quinquennium, 1979-84, and even then it was only as high as 43 per cent. Over the period, 1951 to 1984, the share of statutory transfers in the total budgetary transfers was at its lowest during the period 1961-69 when it had gone down to only 26.5 per cent. Lately, however, the share of non-statutory budgetary transfers, effected through the Planning Commission and the Central Ministries has not exceeded 60 per cent of the total amounts transferred by the Centre to the states, thanks largely to the assertiveness of the recent Finance Commissions.

Whether or not the fact that resource transfers under the Finance Commission's umbrella have not amounted to more than two fifths of the total fiscal transfers is to be interpreted as an erosion in the importance of the constitutional schemes has been a matter of continuing debate. The situation on the ground, however, is that the Planning Commission plays a much more important role, directly as well as indirectly, in the total fiscal transfers from the Centre to the states. The latter role is reflected in the transfers effected by Central Ministries under Central and centrally sponsored schemes which together added up to some 35 per cent of the Central Plan assistance to the states during 1979-84. In any appraisal therefore, of the position with regard to financial relations under the Indian federal system as it has evolved over the years, the role that the Planning Commission has come to play has to be taken full note of.

The single most important reason which enabled the Planning Commission to play a major role right from the beginning of the era of planning in India, was the withdrawal of the Finance Commissions from the sphere of plan-finance, including transfers to states by way of assistance, in grants or loans, for state plans as well as transfers to states for central and cen-

trally sponsored schemes. Whether this withdrawal from the sphere of plan-finance was within the financial scheme, as envisaged in the Constitution, and whether or not this was something that the Finance Commissions were forced to agree to, it is as the Seventh Finance Commission put forthrightly, "a well established practice by now that the Finance Commissions refrain from considering the financing of the Central and state plans".

While asserting that "the freedom of a Finance Commission to evolve its own scheme of transfers for the period covered by its Report is in no way limited", the Seventh Finance Commission readily accepted the constraint that "it should leave the area of plan investments and central assistance for state plans to the Planning Commission". Indeed, the Commission did not regard this constraint "in any real sense a constraint" and went on to argue that the Finance Commission did still influence the financing of state plans. To quote :

The Central assistance for state plans is not decided independently of the situation of the states resulting from the Finance Commission's awards for to the extent that the states' resources are improved *vis-a-vis* their requirements for their plans, the proportion of central assistance for the plan in the total transfer can be smaller.

Distribution of non-plan surpluses

There is considerable substance in the above observation of the Seventh Finance Commission. One major result of this line of approach—namely that the Finance Commission should concern itself with only the non-plan financial needs of the states—has been that, practically all through the years of planning, statutory transfers left a few states with substantial surpluses on revenue account—in recent years these were the states with relatively high per capita income—which can be ploughed back as plan outlay whereas the remaining states with a zero or negligible surplus had to be content with much smaller levels of plan outlay. The latter's plan outlays depended upon the extent of resource transfer they could mobilize through the Planning Commission. The Seventh Finance Commission did try to rectify the position somewhat in trying to evolve a fiscal transfer scheme that "leaves as many of the proorer states as possible with surpluses on revenue account which could be ploughed back for fresh development". Still, the per capita non-plan surplus left with higher income states, as a result largely if not altogether, of the Seventh Finance Commission's dispensation as reflected in statutory transfers, worked out to two and a half times that left with the poorer states. The per capita surplus left with the former group of states under the Eighth Commission's dispensation was three and a half times that left the latter group of states. Comparing the states individually, per capita surplus of Rajasthan was only 6.6 per cent of Haryana's and that of Bihar only 10.6 per cent of Punjab's. That the distribution of non-plan surpluses

has tended to be highly regressive is, as one study demonstrates, also established by the strongly positive correlation between per capita state income and per capita surplus (co-efficient or correlation was 0.667, significant at one percent level). One should add, however that the inter-state distribution of total statutory transfers has in per capita terms, been fairly progressive, although, as the same study has brought out, the benefit of this progressivity has gone more to middle level states than to the poorer states. Thus, for the period 1956-81, per capita statutory transfers to middle income states were higher by 20 per cent compared to those to low income states. The same was, more or less, true of the Central transfers by way of assistance for the state plans, with the premium enjoyed by the middle-income states, however, lower at ten per cent. It is only when one comes to discretionary central transfers to the states, transfers which were made by the various Central Ministries, that one finds equity altogether given the go-by with low income and middle income states receiving 77 per cent and 86 per cent respectively of per capita transfers received by high income states.¹

One of the major arguments often advanced for the centralisation of resources in the hands of the Centre is that the Centre can then see to it that in the inter-state distribution of resource-transfers equity is ensured. In practice, however, it would appear from the performance of the Central Ministries in making discretionary transfers in regard to which their freedom is totally without fetters the cause of equity has been served the least. Both statutory and plan transfers, as was noted above, pass the equity test much better. This was possible to achieve because all said and done, not only the Finance Commissions but also the Planning Commission have been making, or recommending, resource transfers on the basis of criteria which, over the years, have accorded greater weightage to considerations of equity.

Drift into gap-falling and its consequences

With the Finance Commissions confining themselves to non-plan financial needs to the states, it became necessary for them to work out first the basis for determining the share of its revenue the Centre should forego in favour of the states, in the form of both tax sharing and grants taken together, and second the criteria for determining inter-state distribution of the devolution thus decided upon. Basically, what the Finance Commissions have been doing is to determine the states' financial needs on the basis of a forecast of the Centre's and the states' revenues and expenditure. In making their forecast, the Commissions, no doubt applied certain norms. At the same time, they, sought to ensure that non-plan expenditure commitments already entered into by the state governments would be possible for them to meet. This, in effect, meant quaranteeing to the states devolution that at least covered the gap between their non-plan expenditure commitments and revenue receipts. This approach, sometimes referred to as the gap falling approach, of the Finance Commissions could be said to receive its

sanction from their terms of reference. But it cannot be overlooked that even earlier Finance Commissions, whose terms of reference did not commit them on this line of approach with respect to the expenditure commitments to be covered, adopted the same approach, and, in fact, set the pattern for the subsequent Commissions to follow.

It is understandable that the attempt of the earlier Finance Commissions to cover non-plan expenditure commitments worked to the liking of the Centre. It indirectly meant that in deciding upon the share of the Centre's revenues to be given away to the States, the Commission would also have to bear in mind that the Centre's own non-plan expenditure commitments would be covered by the portion of its revenues left with the Centre. In fact, the terms of reference of the more recent Finance Commissions explicitly ask that while recommending Centre-State sharing the Commission should take into account the Centre's committed liabilities. To quote from the Eighth Finance Commission's terms of reference, the Commission was asked that in making its recommendations on tax sharing and grants, it should take into account, among other considerations

The resources of the Central Government and the demands thereon on account of the expenditure on civil administrations, defence and border security, debt servicing and other committed expenditures or liabilities.

It is to be noted that no distinction is sought to be made between expenditure commitments of widely different priority ratings. Nor, was a distinction drawn between the expenditure commitments which came within the Centre's constitutional ambit and those which did not. The fact is that over the years the Centre has, as one study brings out, made inroads into fields coming under the state and concurrent lists of the Indian Constitution in quite a big way through the fiscal and financial instruments at its command and converted a large number of state subjects into virtually concurrent, if not central subjects.² With the Finance Commissions conceding the Centre's claim to the part of its revenues needed to cover its own expenditure commitments almost unquestioningly, it should come as no surprise if the share of statutory transfers in the Centre's revenues was declining. Thus, according to the Eighth Finance Commission's own calculations, statutory transfers under its awards were to account for 24.1 per cent of the central revenue as against 26.01 per cent under the award of the Seventh Finance Commission³

The consequence of adopting the gap filling approach was not only that the Centre could make inroads into the states' jurisdiction with reasonable certainty that its expenditure commitments, once entered into, will become a first charge on its revenues. It also meant that the states themselves had only to establish with a Finance Commission their commitment to a particular spending for it to be covered by the Commission's devolution. Thus,

a system has been perpetuated under which urge to raise revenues and economise in spending is minimal whereas there is everything to be gained by entering into increased non-plan expenditure commitments. This naturally has resulted in emphasis in government budgeting at the Centre as well as in the States on spending as opposed to either resource mobilisation or efficient fiscal management.

Ninth Commission's changed terms

The terms of reference of the recently appointed Ninth Finance Commission do make some departures from the past. The Commission has been asked to "adopt a *normative approach* to the assessment of the receipts and expenditures or revenue account of the states and Centre and, in doing so keep in view the *special problems* of each state, if any, and the special requirements of the Centre such as defence, security, debt servicing and other *committed expenditure of liabilities*" (Emphasis ours)

Firstly, the new Commission's terms speak of a normative approach to assessment of revenues and expenditure without asking it to underwrite expenditure commitments of the states, only the special problems, if any, have to be kept in view. Not that the past Finance Commission's could be accused of not following certain norms in their assessment of the revenues and expenditure of the states. So to be asked to apply a normative approach is not a major departure from the past as to be silent on the states' expenditure commitments of the past. All that its terms of reference ask the Ninth Finance Commission to keep in view are the special problems, if any, of each state.

Will this take care of the non-plan gap which the earlier Finance Commissions found for several of the states and which they sought to cover through statutory grants? Or will this force such states to cut down on their expenditure commitments if they cannot raise additional resources of their own? Such questions are bound to arise at least until it is known how the Ninth Finance Commission interprets its terms of reference. These questions will particularly bother the states with marked dependence on statutory grants, namely the hill states, to which the Eighth Finance Commission recommended average capita grant of Rs. 621 (within, no doubt, a wide range of Rs. 179 to Assam and Rs. 2606 to Nagaland) as against Rs. 34 to low income states.

Secondly, in the assessment of the Centre's revenues and expenditures the Commission has been asked to keep in view its special requirements in regard not only to defence, security and debt servicing but also to 'other committed expenditure or liabilities'. In other words, the Centre's commitments are to continue to be treated as a first charge on its revenues. In this context, it is appropriate to take note that the Centre's non-plan expenditure has lately been increasing at a rate which is considerably high and that therefore its own dependence on borrowing and deficit financing has also been rather high.

Thirdly, the reference to revenue account and the omission of the distinction, drawn hitherto, between plan and non-plan accounts raise a strong suspicion that the Centre would like the Finance Commission's award hereafter to attempt covering the whole of the revenue account, be it of the Centre or the states. Will this entail larger statutory devolution than in the past is a question that the Ninth Commission's award only will answer. But if the Commission feels obliged to follow strictly its terms of reference which require it to treat the Centre's commitments as a first charge on its revenues, regardless of their essentiality or whether or not they fall fully within its constitutional ambit, it is very doubtful that the Commission will be in a position to recommend significantly larger devolution. In fact, it may well feel bound to reduce further the share of devolution to the states in the Centre's revenues.

Loans to States

While as noted, the Indian Constitution does not preclude the use of loans as an instrument of central transfers to the states, it is arguable if borrowing from the Centre was conceived of as a major instrument of the financial scheme envisaged by the Constitution. In actual fact, however, loans have been a major means of transfers from the Centre to the states. Almost one-third of the total resource transfers to the states take place through the instrumentality of central loans. This is possibly the consequence of the constitutional requirement that no state could raise any loan on its own without the consent of the Centre so long as the state owes any outstanding loans to the Centre. The states have, no doubt, continued to raise loans directly from the market and otherwise but only with the consent of the Centre. In fact, state loans thus raised as also most loans made to them by the Centre comprise today a principal source of plan finance for most states. But the result of this substantial dependence of the states on borrowing from the Centre directly or with the Centre's consent has been the accumulation of an enormous outstanding debt of the states.

The states' total outstanding debt amounted to Rs 40,842 crores at the end of March, 1987. Of this, the debt owed to the Centre accounted for two thirds.⁴ Going by the calculations of the Eighth Finance Commission of the transfers it recommended to the States by way of tax sharing and grants, for the five year period 1984-89, the state's repayment and interest obligations on central loans for the same period would absorb not less than 40 per cent thereof. For non-hill states the corresponding proportion works out to be somewhat higher.

The importance of loans in the Central transfers to the states and the problems the states face in the servicing of their debts are inter-connected. The lower the proportion of loans in Central transfers the smaller would have been the increase in their debt given the Constitutional position, and also less serious would have been their servicing problem. As things stand to day, a major proportion of their statutory receipts the States have to set

apart for the servicing of their debt to the Centre. Hence, their increased dependence on non-statutory transfers

The picture is still not quite complete, because the focus so far has been on financial transfers to the states through the budget. But the budget has not been the only channel of financial transfers to the states. There exists in the country a whole panoply of financial and semi-financial institutions which too have acted as a major channel. The principal institutions are (1) the commercial banks, the vast bulk of whose operations falls within the nationalised sector, (2) the public sector's Life Insurance Corporation, (3) term lending financial institutions which again are either altogether in the public sector or in which the public sector has a dominant voice and (4) semi-financial institutions like the public sector rural electrification corporation which have sizeable funds to distribute (here, the public sector is to be taken as the sector in the control of the Central Government.) According to one calculation, funds passing the States through the institutional channel have accounted for over two-fifths of the total finance flowing to the states including that through budgetary transfer.⁵

It should also be added that transfers through these undertakings are altogether in the form of loans which are largely, if not altogether, reflected in the figure given earlier of the state's outstanding debt.

To sum up, in its actual operation the Indian fiscal model has made the states more dependent on the Centre for non-statutory transfers, budgetary and institutional. At the same time it has increased their indebtedness to the Centre, with all its attendant problems in regard to servicing.

- 1 See I S Gulati and K K. George, "Eighth Finance Commission's Award Lessons we can now draw", *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 25, 1987
2. See K K George and I.S Gulati, "Central Inroads into State Subjects," *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 6, 1985.
- 3 See I.S Gulati and K K. George, "Eighth Finance Commission's Award", *op cit*
4. See Reserve Bank of India, Currency and Finance Report, 1986-87
- 5 See I S Gulati and K K George, "Inter-State Re-distribution through Institutional Finance", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, August 1978

ABHIJIT SEN*

A Note on Employment and Living Standards in the Unorganised Sector

THIS NOTE utilizes data from NSS employment-unemployment surveys and from the CSO's estimates of factor incomes to present a profile of the labour force in the unorganised sector and to provide some indicators of the growth of incomes in this sector. For reasons of data availability, the period covered in this note extends only from 1960-61 to 1984-85 and particularly to the even shorter period 1972-73 to 1983-84. Moreover, the note is concerned only with all-India estimates and not with the important issue of regional variations.

1. A profile of the labour force in 1983-84

In its 38th round (January-December 1983), the NSS surveyed both rural and urban households simultaneously for their employment-unemployment characteristics and their consumption profile. Cross-tabulations from this survey provide a useful summary of the overall magnitudes involved at a relatively recent date. However, in interpreting the data as reported in the survey reports a correction has to be made for the fact that the survey under reported total population—the uniform correction factor used being the ratio of the registrar general's populating estimate for mid-year 1983-84 and that reported by the survey. The results throw up certain interesting facts and confirm much that is well known about the economy. In particular :

(a) In aggregate terms there were 304 million 'usual status' workers in 1983 of whom nearly two-thirds were male and over 80 per cent resident in rural areas. Almost 70 per cent of all workers (over 60 per cent of males and over 80 per cent of females) were engaged in agriculture. About 40 per cent of all workers, both male and female, reported their usual status to be as employees. However, while 75 per cent of all female wage workers were rural casual agricultural wage labourers, only about 40 per cent of all male wage workers could be so classified. Thus, urbans, non-agricultural, and permanent wage employment were overwhelmingly male dominated.

(b) Of these 304 million 'usual status' workers only 240 million could

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be found to be gainfully active on any average day. This drop of 21 per cent workers as between the 'usual' and 'current day' status was concentrated among rural females and among casual wage workers. Of these 240 million working person days on a typical day, roughly 50 per cent was in manual work in crop productions, 15 per cent in other agricultural activity and 35 per cent in non-agriculture. Just under 80 per cent of these working person days were performed in rural areas and almost 40 per cent were in wage paid employment.

(c) Although rural employment was overwhelmingly agricultural and urban employment predominantly non-agricultural, non-agricultural employment was not predominantly urban. In fact, for both the self-employed and usually-employed categories, there were more non-agricultural workers resident in rural than in urban areas. Only for regularly employed employees was the number of urban non-agricultural workers larger than the corresponding rural number. However, the bulk of this latter set is in the organised sector. Therefore, unorganised sector workers are predominantly resident in rural areas—overwhelmingly so for agriculture, but also (though to a much lower extent) for non-agriculture.

(d) In both urban and rural areas, those classified on a usual status basis as casual wage employees were the poorest class of workers. They had the lowest per capita monthly consumption expenditure and the highest proportion of persons below any given poverty line among all workers. These also reported unemployment in persons-day terms and were the only workers with significant current unemployment. Such unemployment was of course, higher among those reporting themselves as unemployed in 'usual day' terms, but this class had higher per capita consumption and a lower incidence of poverty than those reporting casual wage employment as their 'usual activity'. This reflects the fact that those reporting their 'usual status' as unemployed usually come from richer households. The poorest households are the agricultural labour households, followed closely by other usual labour households—and these have higher usual status worker rates than on average mainly on account of higher female participation.

(e) The richest class of workers, whether in terms of percapita consumption or of the incidence of poverty, are those with permanent employment in non-agriculture. These workers are, on average better off than the self-employed, agricultural or non-agricultural, in either rural or urban areas. Since workers in the organised sectors are almost wholly in this class and form a large proportion of it, the relative affluence of this class of workers reflects the relative affluence of organised sector workers relative to all other workers. Of course there are also relatively rich self-employed persons in both agriculture and non-agriculture but the proportion of self-employed having per-capita consumption higher than the medium per-capita consumption of the organised sector workers is less than 10 per cent—and the absolute number of such rich self-employed persons is therefore much less than the number of employees in the organised sectors who themselves form

only 8 per cent of the total 'usual status' work force.

2. Changes in the labour force

Since its 14th round (1958-59), the NSS has been collecting employment-unemployment data on a 'current week' definition. Earlier rounds had alternated between 'current day' and 'usual status' and since the 27th round (1972-73), data are available on all three bases. Moreover, NSS concepts and definitions although gradually refined, have maintained a consistency over rounds which makes comparisons over time less hazardous than those using the obvious alternative source of labour force data, the decennial census. The NSS 'weekly status' data thus provide a more or less comparable den's of key labour force characteristics from 1960-61 to 1983-84. These are presented in table 1. Further, in table 2 are given the rates

Table 1
LABOUR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS NSS WEEKLY ACTIVITY STATUS

	1959- 60	1960- 61	1961- 62	1964- 65	1966- 67	1972- 73	1977- 78	1983
<hr/>								
(a) Crude Worker rates (per cent of population)								
Rural males	56.9	54.2	50.3	51.6	52.9	52.5	52.0	51.1
Rural females	21.6	25.9	20.3	24.7	27.3	26.0	23.2	22.7
Urban males	49.7	51.0	49.4	49.9	49.8	49.5	49.1	49.2
Urban females	11.6	13.3	10.5	12.4	10.7	12.2	12.5	11.8
<hr/>								
(b) Employees as per cent of workers								
Rural males	28.1	30.7	31.6	27.3	28.5	32.2	35.3	35.9
Rural females	27.0	29.5	29.8	28.2	30.7	36.3	28.8	37.4
Urban males	58.8			60.2	59.4	60.6	59.6	59.6
		(52.9)	(53.0)					
Urban females	44.2			47.6	47.8	56.5	54.7	60.8
<hr/>								
(c) Workers in agriculture as per cent of all workers								
Rural males	78.7	80.3	78.4	78.5	77.9	80.9	78.0	75.6
Rural females	82.2	86.3	82.5	83.2	85.0	85.8	83.7	78.5
Urban males	13.6			10.0	2.8	9.4	9.7	9.0
		(16.6)	(16.5)					
Urban females	25.6			26.2	28.3	22.6	22.7	22.7

Tabel 2
RATES OF GROWTH OF WORKERS BY SECTOR

	1960-61 to 1965-66	1965-66 to 1972-73	1972-73 to 1977-78	1977-79 to 1983-84
1. Population	2.22	2.23	2.25	2.23
2. Organised sector employment	5.08	2.80	2.43	2.23
3. Unorganised sector (weekly status bases)				
(i) (a) in agriculture	2.28	2.60	0.61	0.89
(b) in non-agriculture	2.55	1.42	3.55	4.14
(c) of wage labour	1.62	4.91	2.70	2.25
(d) of self-employed	2.62	1.26	0.65	1.55
(e) total	2.34	2.28	1.36	1.79
(ii) (usual status bases)				
(a) in agriculture	n.a.	n.a.	2.07	1.31
(b) in non-agriculture	n.a.	n.a.	4.94	4.68
(c) of wage labour	n.a.	n.a.	4.21	3.10
(d) of self-employed	n.a.	n.a.	1.86	1.52
(e) total	n.a.	n.a.	2.66	2.10
(iii) (current day status)				
(a) in agriculture	n.a.	n.a.	0.66	1.03
(b) in non-agriculture	n.a.	n.a.	0.61	4.49
(c) of wage labour	n.a.	n.a.	1.92	3.47
(d) of self-employed	n.a.	n.a.	0.09	1.26
(e) total	n.a.	n.a.	0.65	1.99

of growth of employment in the unorganised sector as obtained by applying the NSS ratios to the registrar-general's population figures and netting out the estimates of employment in the organised sector. These tables show.

- (a) The growth of organised sector employment which grew rapidly upto 1965-66, has only kept pace with population thereafter.

- (b) On a 'current week' basis, employment in the unorganised sector kept pace with population growth till 1972-73, but fallen significantly below it since then.
- (c) In the period 1972-73 to 1981-84, the work force in 'usual status' terms has been at roughly the rate of growth of population but the current status work force has grown at a significantly lower rate, reflecting lower intensity of employment among the usual status work force.
- (d) Since 1965, usual status in unorganised non-agriculture and of the unorganised sector wage-earners has grown significantly faster than population while the corresponding figures for agriculture and for self-employment show growth rates lower than that of population. This relative shift away from agriculture and from self-employment is also evident in the current status figures but is somewhat less marked essentially because there has been increasing 'casualisation' of the labour force. The rate of growth of wage labour has been even faster than that of wage labour, both in agriculture and non-agriculture, and the fact that these workers have a much lower ratio of current to usual status employment ratios is mainly responsible for the lower growth rates in current status than in usual status employment.
- (e) The fall in the share of usual status workers in agriculture as shown by the NSS is corroborated by a comparison of the results of the 1971 and 1981 population censuses. The low rates of growth of agricultural employment as measured by current activity are corroborated by studies, such as that of Bhalla (1987) and of Vaidyanathan (1986), of labour absorption in agriculture.
- (f) The rise in share of employees, most marked among rural workers, is partially, corroborated by results of the Rural Labour Enquiries. These showed a sharp rise in the share of rural households dependent on wage labour to all rural households between 1963-64 and 1974-75 from 25 per cent to 30 per cent and of the share of agricultural labour households from 21 to 25 per cent. This reversed an earlier trend of decline in the latter proportions as revealed in comparisons of Agriculture Labour Enquiries 1950-51, 1956-57 and the Rural Labour Enquiry 1963-64. However the census data suggest a somewhat different picture. These show that the per cent of agricultural labour to all agricultural workers declined slightly between 1951 and 1961, increased sharply between 1961 and 1971 and then declined marginally between 1971 and 1981. While comparisons of the 1951 and 1971 censuses fit broadly the results of the Labour Enquiries, the census comparison between 1971 and 1981 contradicts the picture thrown up by the NSS. Moreover, the NSS itself suggests a contrary picture in its rural debt and investment surveys for 1971-72.

and 1981-1982 where the share of cultivator households is seen to go up and that of agricultural labourer households to go down. Nonetheless, the trend suggested by the NSS employment-unemployment surveys should be accepted. This is because the 1981 Census, besides being not strictly comparable in terms of definitions with the 1971 Census, shows a large increase in 'marginal' workers who are unallocated to sectors and because the 'unclassified' workers are included among non-agriculturists and not distributed pro-rata as earlier. The results of the NSS employment-unemployment surveys show that worker rates after 1970 are very sensitive to the exact definitions particularly of those workers who have low person-day employment as is the case for casual labourers. The contradictions between the NSS employment-unemployment surveys and the NSS debt and investment surveys is even easier to explain. Unlike the former, which distinguished between cultivators and agricultural labourers on the basis of major income source, the latter classifies all households doing some cultivation as cultivators. What appears to have happened is that there was a small increase in the proportion of rural households reporting some cultivation but a large increase in the per cent of households who while indulging in cultivation report wage earnings as their main source of incomes. This is in fact a trend noticeable even in earlier data, and reflects the fact that casualisation of rural labour occurs in India through a process of marginalisation of tiny cultivators from cultivation and is not the result of outright eviction. Needless to say, this makes identification of the main activity of a worker more difficult and it is better to rely on a data source such as the NSS employment-unemployment surveys which are more careful and consistent in design.

- (g) The process of marginalisation and casualisation is not confined only to the agricultural sector. In fact, the category of casual non-agricultural wage labourers shows the highest growth rate in numbers of all workers between 1977-78 and 1983-84. Their numbers increased at almost 9 per cent per annum and overall there was a 53 per cent increase in 6 years. Unfortunately for earlier years we do not have data classified by both status and industry separately and cannot separate out employees in agriculture from those in industry.

3 *Changes in per-worker incomes in the unorganised sector*

In its National Account Statistics, the C.S.O. regularly publishes data on the factor distribution of incomes. The quality of this data, available from 1960-61 onwards, is variable depending upon the sector involved. Being based on current data, it is known to be good for agriculture and for

the organised sectors. But for unorganised non-agriculture the data is much less firm. However, the CSO data represents the best judgement of the CSO experts from a very large mass of evidence ordinarily unavailable to individual researcher and must be given credence. Nonetheless, given the quality of the data it is safer to rely on a broad rather than a very fine disaggregation. In any case, the level of disaggregation possible with the labour force data is as between organised and unorganised sectors and, within the unorganised sector, between (i) employees and self employed; and (ii) between agriculture and non-agriculture—it not being possible to do a industry-employment status cross classification. For these reasons, this is the level of disaggregation chosen to calculate the per-workers incomes presented in table 3. Here income includes compensation to employees and mixed income of the self-employed and excludes rent, interest and profit. The incomes are expressed in 1970-71 prices using the CSO private consumption expenditure deflator. Real incomes obtained in this manner for different categories (organised private, organised public, unorganised self-employed, unorganised employees, unorganised agriculture and unorganised non-agriculture) are divided by the respective number of workers (by weekly status NSS category) to obtain per worker incomes. Table 3 also gives the CSO estimates of the share of wages in participation incomes separately for unorganised agriculture and non-agriculture. The table shows that :

- (a) Very impressive increases have occurred in per-worker incomes in the organised sectors—this being greater for the public sector than for the private organised sector. Public sector workers more than doubled their real income between 1960-61 and 1984-85 while that of private organised sector workers went up by more than 60 per cent. The entire increase occurred after 1967-68 and the rate of growth of real incomes has accelerated after the mid-seventies.
- (b) In contrast, per-worker incomes in the unorganised sector as a whole increased less than 30 per cent between 1960-61 and 1984-85 and very little of this occurred after 1977-78. Most of the gains recorded were in the decade 1967-68 to 1977-78.
- (c) Within the unorganised sector, there is no trend at all in the income per worker either of those who were wage workers or those who worked in agriculture.
- (d) Real income gains of about 50 per cent were recorded over the entire period by the self-employed and by the non-agricultural work force. The gains accrued largely in the decade 1967-68 to 1977-78, with little increase in the period preceding 1967-68 and, in case of non-agriculture, with little gains subsequent to 1977-78. In case of the self-employed, however, there was a step-jump in 1983-84.
- (e) To the extent there were gains recorded in unorganised sector

Table 3
PARTICIPATION INCOMES PER WORKER

Rs. per capita, 1970-71 prices

Year	Organised Sector Compensation to Employees		Incomes for All Unorganised	Mixed Incomes of self-employed (unorg.)	Compensation to Employees in all unorganised	All incomes unorganised sector		Share of Compensation Employee (per cent)	
	Public	Private				Agri.	Non-Agri.	Agri.	Non-Agri.
1960-61	2935	3916	1045	1021	1106	963	1268	25.9	37.8
61-62	3007	3918	1032	1007	1097	931	1320	25.6	37.9
62-63	3064	4033	1004	945	1166	896	1340	29.1	37.1
63-64	3030	4175	1029	997	1112	935	1314	26.8	35.2
64-65	3007	3932	1117	1113	1129	1030	1370	24.1	34.7
65-66	3020	3988	997	951	1122	891	1352	26.7	37.5
66-67	2897	3813	1017	999	1064	921	1303	24.6	38.4
67-68	2921	3849	1085	1093	1074	1009	1324	24.0	38.2
68-69	3267	4276	1083	1080	1086	975	1401	24.6	40.2
69-70	3256	4337	1108	1119	1068	996	1428	24.3	39.9
70-71	3581	4655	1194	1229	1127	1073	1552	22.4	42.9
71-72	3677	4295	1166	1186	1121	1048	1567	24.9	42.1
72-73	3615	4463	1112	1178	979	982	1502	21.4	42.2
73-74	3473	3930	1226	1386	896	1133	1487	17.7	38.5
74-75	3631	3725	1154	1311	835	1013	1539	17.2	37.0
75-76	4296	4357	1199	1311	974	998	1809	21.0	37.3
76-77	4372	4731	1206	1208	997	990	1817	22.1	37.4
77-78	4453	4979	1289	1366	1129	1067	1941	24.8	38.5
78-79	4599	5223	1261	1328	1133	1033	1903	26.0	38.1
79-80	4501	4958	1154	1202	1065	911	1816	28.1	36.8
80-81	4843	5054	1286	1402	1066	1035	1945	23.0	36.7
81-82	4952	4954	1282	1391	1078	1001	1980	23.9	36.3
82-83	5290	5738	1270	1370	1084	974	1999	23.4	37.4
83-84	5497	5913	1383	1534	1124	1124	1998	21.3	37.1
84-85	5945	6300	1324	1492	1058	1027	2005	19.3	38.1

Source CSO National Accounts Statistics and GOI Economic Surveys.

self-employment and non-agricultural activity, these would be much reduced if 'usual activity' concept of worker had been adopted instead of the 'current week' concept. A further reduction would have taken place if the denominator was 'usually active males' For this reason, household per-capita incomes in the relevant households is likely to have increased much less than the per-worker income increases recorded here. Such a change in the worker concept would result in declining per-capita incomes of the unorganised sector after the mid-seventies and this would be true of both its agricultural and non-agricultural segments. This is of some importance to note because it is the period since the mid-seventies which has seen the most impressive growth in per-worker incomes in the organised sector and also the bulk of the relative shift of the work force within the unorganised sector from agriculture to non-agriculture.

- (f) While the growth of unorganised sector incomes per worker does not appear to be correlated with the growth of incomes in the organised sector, it does appear to be correlated with growth of incomes of the self-employed agriculturists. During the period from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies, incomes per worker in agriculture were constant but the share of the self-employed agriculturists was falling sharply in the agricultural work force while their share in agricultural incomes was rising, also sharply. It would thus appear that the impetus for growth of unorganised non-agricultural incomes comes less from the growth of organised sector incomes than from the growth of the incomes of the relatively rich in agriculture. With shifting terms of trade against agriculture since the mid-seventies, this impetus seems to have been lost somewhat.
- (g) Simultaneously, there is much evidence that labour absorption in agriculture has also slowed down very sharply after the mid-seventies. As a result there has been some spillover of the unorganised labour force from agriculture to non-agriculture, reflected most clearly in the phenomenal growth of non-agricultural casual labour noted in the previous section. It is this casualisation of unorganised non-agriculture which underlies the fact that per-capita incomes of people dependent on this sector probably fell after the mid-seventies while per-worker (rather narrowly defined) incomes remained stable.

4 *Conclusion-Poverty and trickle-down processes*

There is the basis of a fundamental contradiction in the contrast between the fact, noted by Dandekar, that per-capita agricultural incomes have remained unchanged over the last forty years and the official view, based on selected NSS consumer surveys, that there has been a significant decline in

poverty in the last decade and a half. Resolution of the contradiction requires either that agricultural income have been substantially better distributed or that non-agriculture has been able to provide incomes to the poor and that the dynamics of such non-agricultural growth is not impeded by a stagnant agriculture. No one seriously claims a significant improvement in the income distribution within agriculture. But some proponents of the official view do believe in the existence of the second process—i.e. a trickle down of the undoubted increases in overall non-agricultural incomes to the poor through increased employment in unorganised non-agriculture. They thus seek to explain the 'evidence' of reduced poverty as obtained from NSS consumer surveys by the evidence of a fall in the share of agriculture as obtained from NSS employment-unemployment surveys. The results noted in this note tend to shed doubt not only on the claim that poverty is declining but also on the mechanism supposed to make this possible in the context of a stagnant agriculture.

In order to be sceptical about the official view that poverty is declining secularly, one does not need to doubt the evidence from NSS consumer surveys that poverty was less in 1983-84 than in 1977-78 which in turn was less than in 1972-73—the only years on which NSS consumer surveys have been conducted since they became quinquennial. A look at table 3 would show that incomes per worker increased between these dates for the entire unorganised sector and in those of its segments—the wage-employed and agriculture—where the poor are largely located. Yet, the same table shows that there is no evidence that incomes per worker have shown any increasing trend in these segments. Moreover, the data presented here suggests that unorganised non-agriculture is likely to be more responsive to growth in demand from agriculture than to growth in the organised sectors, and that much of the shift of workers to non-agriculture may be a result of marginalisation due to stagnant labour demand in agriculture rather than an indication of positive developments. These, undoubtedly tentative, conclusions suggest that the poor can have little hope from the policy of low growth of employment and high growth of wages and productivity in organised sectors which has characterised recent Indian development. Moreover, despite plenty of lip-service to the contrary, Indian policy-makers seem disinclined to place adequate emphasis either on agricultural growth or to rural reform.

Book Review

Revolt and Religion : Petty Bourgeois Romanticisation

DAVID HARDIMAN ; *The Coming of the Devi . Adivasi Assertion in Western India* ; OUP, 1987, pp 248.

THE subject Hardiman takes up, the process of the self-assertion of a class, of oppressed peasantry and agricultural labour, is indeed a rich and fruitful theme that requires much more development in both the sphere of history and of anthropology. And in its small way, *Social Scientist* from its very inception in 1972 had attempted to fill this gap. This has involved in critiques of two eclectic tendencies : the nationalist historiography of Bipan Chandra, Majid Siddiqui and others, and the school that produced the *Subaltern Studies* series of history.

In his present work, Hardiman not only takes the nationalist historians to task as they find it "hard to come to terms with the fact that these movements were started and carried on by the Adivasis themselves,"¹ but also criticises the socialist historians, who he claims ignore the religiosity of the Adivasis, "even though it must have had a profound bearing on their state of consciousness. . . They confine their studies to highly militant struggles in which the economic cause of discontent appears to be of far greater consequence than any informing religious ideology. Less militant and more obviously 'religious' movements, of the sort with which we are concerned here, appear to them to be suffused with a 'backward looking' perhaps 'petty bourgeois' religiosity which they believe cripples the enterprise from the start. Such movements have, in consequence, been ignored"²

He has, however, a deeper critique than that of Marxist historiography which he states in a footnote : "Nowadays western Marxist historians have largely abandoned the vulgar base/super-structure metaphor . . . Historical determination is seen to be full of unevenness and lack of congruity and to involve altogether more complex processes"³ Having abandoned this fundamental basis of materialism, all sorts of pitfalls develop in analysing raw material, leading to erroneous conclusions which could easily be resolved had the author cared to accept the basic material nature of life. He takes it for granted that the term *Kahparaj*, used for the tribes he is studying, is

a racist one, "meaning the black people"⁴ In this, he is no different from the early twentieth century Congressmen who coined alternative terms like *Raniparaj* or *Girijan* relieve them of a term that was thought to be offensive.

In fact, the term has quite different origins, as Fukazawa explains "The villages as a rule took the collective form of habitation. There, the village site was called *pandhari* (literally 'white') and was usually surrounded by earthen walls. Outside the village sites there were agricultural lands called *Kali* (literally 'black') It is said that people originally inhabited the white soil unfit for cultivation and turned the black soil widely found in the Deccan in-to their agricultural fields"⁵

Thus, the term he loads with racist connotations merely reflects the existence of adivasis away from the villages in the fields. In fact, he himself notes how "the adivasis lived in small clusters of houses known as *faliyas*" and that "the houses were dispersed in clusters throughout the village lands."⁶ And that is why they are the *Kaliparaj*, people living in their agricultural lands.

In the same way, he fails to identify concretely who the *Adivasis* are. He states he prefers to use the term *Adivasi* (aborigine) instead of 'Tribal' whose "strong evolutionist connotation" he does not like as he puts it down to "Social Darwinism,"⁷ quite ignoring the perfectly valid concept of successive modes of production and their inter-articulation in different socio-economic formations in history. On other hand, he chooses the term *Adivasi*, being fully aware that the term was rejected as it was "question-begging" for not all so-called adivasis were aboriginals, but also as it was "full of mischief" according to G.S. Ghurye the anthropologist, who felt it was "divisive, undermining the unity of the Indian nation."⁸ He, however, feels that in spite of being an unscientific nomenclature that is precisely why it should be used. He asserts that the term 'adivasi' "relates to a particular historical development : that of the subjugation during the nineteenth century of a wide variety of communities which before the colonial period had remained free, or at least relatively free, from the control of outside states. This process was accompanied by an influx of traders, money-lenders, and landlords who established themselves under the protection of the colonial authorities and took advantage of the new judicial system to deprive the adivasis of large tracts of their land. In this way outsiders who had dealt previously with the adivasis on terms of relative equality became their exploiters and masters. This experience generated a spirit of resistance which incorporated a consciousness of 'the adivasi' against the outsiders. Gradually an awareness grew that other communities in different parts of India were sharing the same fate, which gave rise to a wider sense of adivasiness"⁹

It is, in fact, its very divisive basis that makes Hardiman choose a definition he admits is purely subjective and unscientific. In this how different is the Subaltern school of thinking from that great founder of dialectic-

cal and historical materialism, Karl Marx, who stated that "the political unity of India, more consolidated, and extending farther than it ever did under the Great Moghuls, was the first condition of its regeneration."¹⁰ He does not stop at that. He goes on to castigate those fragmentary castes as "those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power"¹¹ He had no illusions as to which forces put forward divisive tactics, and he paraphrases Disraeli in this context. "The British Empire in India was founded on the old principle of *divide et impera* (divide and rule)—but that principle was put into action by respecting the different nationalities of which India consisted, by avoiding to tamper with their religion, and by protecting their landed property"¹² Is this the triad of distinctiveness, religiosity and property that we are expected to swallow as Subaltern 'theory'?

Is it anything more than the ideological basis of missionary-led movements like the Jharkhand and in the North-East? And are we to accept it in the face of the experience of the great socialist revolutions daily transforming our world, that have cast it on the dustbin of history or relegated it to the marginal activity of agencies like the CIA?

In fact, Hardiman too is hard put to integrate the phenomenon of spirit-possession as a tribal ritual with the growing *political* consciousness of the same people when he claims—again, with a remarkable lack of insight into the material life of the people he is describing—that the rhyme recited during the movement:

Ganjī dongar chadla bai
Kaccha sutane Salabai,

Probably meant "Salabai (the devi), with the help of a weak thread (i.e. with considerable difficulty) had climbed Gandhi's Hill"¹³ To achieve this translation, he has to conclude that "Ganj" was almost certainly a wrong pronunciation of 'Gandhi'. First, it is unthinkable that a people of Gujrat, and then, close to Bardoli, would mispronounce a name like Gandhi, which was a Gujarati name. Secondly, Godavari Parulekar, working in the same area, and a leader of the most persistent tribal movement of that area, was perfectly well aware of what '*ganji*' means. It is a word in their daily existence: "Their acquaintance with figures was confined to the counting of bundles of grass. Five bundles made a "small stack" (*ganji*) and five hundred bundles made a "big stack (*ganj*)."¹⁴ It would mean then that Salabai with very little achieved a big task, that is, carrying a stack up the hill. The connection with such stacks and the arduous nature of cutting and stacking grass was a part of their regular existence.

Godavari Parulekar describes how "during the grass-cutting season one sees from the railway rows and rows of these labourers bent over their work . . . They have to stay out on the field till all the grass is cut. When it is cold, they light wood fires and sleep around them. But when it rains their condition bears no description. While work is in progress during the day, the landowners' Baiyya and foreman walk around with their thick

canes constantly shouting . 'Get a move on there ! Get a move on there !' to prevent the pace of work from slackening. The labourers stand streaming with sweat under the merciless sun, with not a moment's opportunity either to quench their thirst or take a puff or two on their bidis . . . After cutting the grass much work still remains to be done The grass has to be gathered in sheaves of 500 lbs . These sheaves are stacked together to save them from the effect of sun and rain The labourers then press these bundles of grass into bales, transport them to godowns, from the godowns to the railway stations and load them on the trains Grass-cutting entails doing all these jobs from beginning to end Until 1945 all the wages an Adivasi got for doing this work was a couple of annas or that much worth of toddy" ¹⁵ Obviously the *ganyu* is much more likely to be the sheaf that loomed so large in the material existence of the people and was much more likely to be the direct subject of their religiosity

Also, in order to establish the singular adivasi identity, Hardiman has often to stretch a point He fails to realize, as a result, why in a religious movement "the Vaniya and Brahmin shahukars were spared", not "because they were on the whole less oppressive than the Parsis,"¹⁶ but rather because in religious terms the Adivasis did identify more with them—and even the possession was a variant of the propitiation ceremony for the small-pox deity—Sitaladevi "¹⁷ In fact, even the illegitimate children of Adivasis by landlords were distinguished, as Parulekar notes . "So common a feature were the illicit relations between landlords and the Adivasi women that a special name had come to be given to their progeny. They were called 'Watlas', a special caste. This name was applied only to the progeny of non-Hindu landlords",¹⁸ although Hindu landlords also contributed their own share. So it is obvious that any study that stresses, arbitrarily, the distance between the Hindu peasantry and Adivasis is likely to ignore very important facts and, as a result, come to erroneous conclusions,

Also, in his attempt to highlight the "religiosity" of the Adivasis, even their spontaneous class-solidarity becomes obscured and the limited and diversionary aspect of the Devi possession movement is ignored. First, he fails to explain why the social boycott of Parsis, a "novel feature" as far as anti-drink movements were concerned, was resorted to in late 1922. He says "the reason for its inclusion was that the adivasis had found through experience that the Parsis were able to break such movements by using various tricks, such as giving free drink . . . In only one respect was the boycott incomplete the adivasis who cultivated Parsi lands as tenants were not prohibited from doing so "¹⁹ They continued to till the lands that were theirs anyway but refused to pay rent. This aspect was noted by Frederick Engels in the 1857 revolt as well, where he noted how much peasant support for the revol, there was because it disabled "the cultivators to pay their land tax or at least affording them an excuse for not doing so,"²⁰ Tenants in struggle do not refuse to cultivate. They expropriate the

landlords or refuse to pay tax to the state.

The class angle is clear as the movement took an anti-Vaniya position in Dadhwada village of Mander Taluka where "half the land was owned by Vaniyas of Mandri who personally supervised its cultivation by hired Chodhri labourers. The local Parsi liquor dealer had only about five acres of land in the village."²¹ In Dadhvada, therefore, the Vaniyas performed a similar agrarian role to the Parsis elsewhere, and significantly it was they who were singled out as the chief exploiters.

But then his perspective makes him compare this far wider confrontation with the 1875 revolt of Kunbis against money-lenders in which outside money-lenders (Marwaris) were attacked while local Brahmins were spared.²² Such diversionary trends are confused with a broad-based expression of class-antagonism only because of the *a priori* notion that the crude tribal/outsider dichotomy as basic to class-struggle among the Adivasis. On the contrary, it has more often than not [played into the hands of the all-pervasive exploiter in our nineteenth and early twentieth century history, the colonial power. If subaltern studies are to obscure and whitewash the role of the colonial power, then they are doing the greatest disservice to the cause of the very subaltern groups they claim to stand for.

From their theoretical view point, as put out by Hardiman, divisive movements and diversionary movements become "a strong thrust towards synthesis,"²³ relying on myths like the one that "In the past the adivasis had managed to isolate themselves to a large extent from the mainstream of Indian life."²⁴ Any one who knows anything about Indian history and its adivasi substratum, as well as the constant integration of adivasis even as Kshatriyas, will realise that this condition of isolation was first imposed upon the adivasis by the colonial administration when it plundered their lands and natural resources and relegated them to animal reserves hemmed in by "inner line regulations." This monstrous period in the history of the subaltern classes, and the role that imperialism plays in it is sought to be obscured by taking up marginal and diversionary upsurges as being their most historically important form of expression of subaltern aspirations.

From such a perspective then, it is not surprising that *revivalism* takes on the aspect of *revitalisation* in certain specific historical contexts.²⁵ And the highest form of class struggle, the armed resistance of the oppressed against the oppressor, becomes "futile". In fact, Hardiman notes with approval that "unlike many adivasis in many other parts of India they did not attempt a futile revolt."²⁶ Apart from the fact that the whole of Indian history is witness to the truth, from the Indigo Revolt of 1859-60 which gained far more sweeping concessions from imperialism than the non-violent Champaran movement, to the Punnappa Vylar, Tripura and Telengana uprisings on the eve of independence, that there is no alternative but to overthrow the exploiting classes by force, even in the area of study of Hardiman. It is doubtful whether the adivasis would have gained the con-

cessions that they have today had there not been a violent upsurge like that of the forties. Hardiman describes how during the Quit India movement, with the arrest of the Gandhian ashramites, "Adivasi activists raided the villages in which there were loyalists and Parsis and burnt their haystacks, cut down their toddy trees, smashed their toddy pots and set alight their toddy shops. They broke into and looted their houses and set them on fire. They raided the houses of the Sahukars and destroyed their account books, hoping thereby to wipe out their debts. As a result many patels resigned and many Parsis closed down their liquor and toddy businesses for the duration of the period of the attacks"²⁷ He points out how these events began with anti-imperialist manifestations in Pardi taluka in 1940, but then, he concludes that with mass arrests in Baroda the process ended in February 1943. This did not happen, for the Warli revolt surfaced in 1945-47 in the area next to Pardi. Umargam, Dahanu and Palghar, led by the Communist Party of India, with Godawari Parulekar, the first woman to become the President of the All India Kisan Sabha at its Golden Jubilee Session in 1986 as one of its leaders.

She describes the process as follows: "As the repression against the Adivasis became more and more severe, their resistance also strengthened. With increasing resistance, repression increased further, till it reached the extreme limit of calling in the military to crush the revolt of the Adivasis, as the police did not dare enter the villages alone. Even when armed, they were no match for the Adivasis who participated in huge processions and resistance during the day, disappeared into the jungles at the fall of night without leaving a trace behind."²⁸ They laid ambushes, they blocked roads, and even "marched on a godown near Gholwad station used for storing grass because some Warlis were being held prisoners there. They freed the prisoners and brought them home with cries of triumph"²⁹

The events were similar to those described by Hardiman, but the perspective is very different: "The Adivasis, who already hated the farmhouses as places of persecution, were further embittered against them by the cruel use the police was putting them to. Enraged, they swooped down upon these places and set about destroying them systematically, till nothing remained but a few walls damaged here and there. Some houses were totally obliterated so that not a stone was left to bear witness to their existence. No educated person with culture would be surprised by the fact that as soon as the Warlis became aware of their strength they first moved to destroy these very places where their women's honour had been ravished. History has forgiven the French people for destroying the Bastille... History will certainly declare that the destruction of these dens of oppression by the Warlis to save themselves and their women's honour was justified and must be forgiven"³⁰ The army was called but it was forced to leave on account of public opinion against it.³¹ So, where the subaltern historian sees futility, incarceration and defeat, the revolutionary notes: "In the sacred fire of the agitation that had raged from 1945, the Adivasis made

offerings of such evils as serfdom, marriage-servants, vethbigar (bondage), grass and forest work at four and two annas a day, and many other forms of exploitation”³² This, indeed, is the history of the subaltern groups that another revolutionary, Antonio Gramsci speaks of, when he says : “The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmental and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups ; it therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in success”³³

Hardiman too notes this trend towards unification but that it is understood by the Adivasi in terms quite distinctly different from those mapped out as the parameters of Adivasi consciousness by the Subaltern tendency in historiography, is also obvious. And perhaps, the Adivasi should have the last word “Remember what we were like in the old days ? We knew nothing beyond the landlord, his beatings, loans, marriage, birth, death and farming. We knew nothing of the world Now we talk about things like the Communist Party, Red Flag meetings, Party meetings, the doings of the Congress and the Red Flag, which Congress leaders say what, what our people say, why I am poor, why I starve, what must be done, how our work should progress. If we go to town, the shop-keepers and the rich people greet us and ask us to sit down They give us the news and tell us about Russia, China and America. We feel as if the door to the world has opened before us.”³⁴ It is the door of proletarian internationalism that beckons to all exploited and oppressed people all over the world to unite and fight, breaking the shackles of petty separatism, of religious fundamentalism and other divisive diversions towards the international brotherhood of man. That is the real perspective of the history of the Subaltern groups. That is the perspective the Subaltern chooses to remember and the Subaltern historian chooses to ignore.

SUNEET CHOPRA

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All India Agricultural Workers' Union, New Delhi.

1 Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devil* (1987) p 7

2 Hardiman, D, *op cit*, p 9

3. Hardiman, D, *op cit.*, p 10 fn. 24

4. Hardiman, D, *op cit*, pp. 13-14

5. Fukazawa, H “Agrarian Relations and Land Revenue” in *The Cambridge Economic History of India* (1984) p 250

6 Hardiman, D *op cit*, p 78

7 Hardiman, D, *op cit*, p. 14.

8. Hardiman, D. *op cit*, p 13.

- 9 Hardiman, D *op cit* , p. 15, Emphasis added
- 10 Marx K "The Future Results of British Rule in India" in *The First Indian War of Independence* (1978), p 30, (July 22, 1853).
- 11 Marx, K *op cit* , p 32
- 12 Marx, K "The Indian Question" in *op cit* , p 45, (July 28, 1957).
- 13 Hardiman, D *op cit* , p 34.
- 14 Parulekar, G *Adivasis Revolt* (1975), p 172.
- 15 Parulekar, G *op cit.*, pp 97-98
- 16 Hardiman, D *op. cit* , p 157
- 17 Hardiman, D *op cit.*, pp 22-25.
18. Parulekar, G *op cit* , p. 47 , See also Hardiman, D. *op. cit* , pp. 126-27.
- 19 Hardiman D *op cit* , p 156
- 20 Engels, F "The Revolt in India." in Marx K. *op. cit* , p 140, (May 1958),
- 21 Hardiman, D *op. cit.*, p 156.
- 22 Hardiman, D *op. cit* , p 157
- 23 Hardiman, D. *op. cit* , p 160.
- 24 Hardiman, D. *op cit* , p. 161.
- 25 Hardiman, D *op cit* , p 129.
- 26 Hardiman, D *op. cit* , p 213.
- 27 *Ibid*
- 28 Parulekar, G *op cit* , pp. 132-133.
- 29 Parulekar, G. *op. cit* , pp 133-134.
- 30 Parulekar, G *op cit* , p. 135
- 31 Parulekar, G *op. cit.*, p. 138.
- 32 Parulekar, G. *op. cit* , p. 139
- 33 Gramsci, A "Notes on Italian History" in *Selection from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), p 54.
- 34 Parulekar, G *op. cit* , p 181.

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Subaltern Studies III & IV: A Review Article

The Elitism of Nationalist Discourse. Review
Article **Sunil K. Choudhary**

Congress, Peasants and the Civil Disobedience
Movement in Bihar 1930-1932 **K.K. Sharma**

Book Review 'A Conspicuous Model of
Peace' **Partha Datta**

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- 1 A Eckstein, China's Economic Revolution, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977
- 2 See R Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', Journal of Comparative Economics, December 1979, pp 325-45

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Editorial Note

There has been in recent years a veritable explosion of research in the sphere of modern Indian history. Opinions may differ among historians about the significance of much of this research. Non-historians may well ask with old-fashioned naivete what all this research adds up to, or whether the very notion of a body of research 'adding up to something' has itself become out of fashion. Some others may see in this or that trend of research a belated capturing of some European intellectual fashion of yesteryears. Nonetheless, no matter what attitude one takes to this vast body of emerging research, there is no denying the sheer energy, the sheer creative effort that is going into the production of this output. *Social Scientist* has always considered it its duty to bring to its readers from time to time a whiff of this effort. Accordingly, we devote the current number to a discussion of certain themes in modern Indian history and historiography.

Much of this number is taken up by reviews of articles appearing in Volumes III and IV of *Subaltern Studies*, by a group of young scholars belonging to Delhi University and to Jawaharlal Nehru University. This is not the first time that we are carrying such a critical evaluation of the efforts of the 'subaltern school', once, on an earlier occasion too we had devoted a whole issue to a review of articles appearing in the earlier volumes of *Subaltern Studies*. Some may indeed feel that, unlike on that occasion, by now so much has been written on the 'subaltern school' that the topic itself has become somewhat stale. But the fact remains that this school, no matter what attitude one may have towards it, did draw into its fold a number of distinguished young historians whose contributions had, and continue to have till today, a perceptible impact on modern Indian historiography. It is only proper that a journal like ours should take note of their effort, whether or not they continue to occupy the centre-stage in the rapidly changing fashions in historiography.

We should, however, make one point clear. The group of reviewers who have come together to discuss the 'subaltern school' do not necessarily constitute an alternative 'school', on a par with and in contradistinction to the 'subaltern school'. And most certainly, they do not constitute a 'School' enjoying the official imprimatur of *Social Scientist* backing. The fact that we have devoted this number to a discussion of 'subaltern studies' should not give rise to the belief that in the pages that follow there is a confrontation between the '*Social Scientist* school' and the 'subaltern school'. To be sure, the editorial team

running *Social Scientist* does have certain provisional views on the efforts of the 'subaltern' historians, as it has, and must have, on a host of other subjects. But these working ideas, which a team like ours must necessarily have on diverse subjects, do not certainly amount in any specific instance to a school of thought within any particular discipline, and in the pages that follow it is not necessarily these ideas which are articulated. As readers will notice, each young scholar who has contributed to the current number has reacted to a specific article in the 'subaltern' volumes. We have brought these pieces together because we as a journal would like to see a good deal more of discussion on the issues being raised by the 'subaltern' historians, who incidentally, do not themselves constitute a homogenous set.

The article by K.K. Sharma, documenting the stance of the Congress in the context of the acute peasant distress and discontent in Bihar in the early 1930s, shows how the Congress acted on the whole as a restraining influence on the peasantry, rather than as an instigator of peasant agitations, as contemporary official circles often charged. The effects of the Depression, combined with those of natural calamities, brought acute distress to large sections of the Bihar peasantry during 1930-32. While the Congress on the one hand had to reckon with grass-root peasant militancy, and could not turn its back on peasant demands, on the other hand the strong links it had forged with the rural gentry, the fact that high-caste landlords were well represented in its provincial leadership, the desire on its part to "restore and maintain cordial relations between the landlords and the tenants", and its overall insistence on non-violence meant a curbing of peasant militancy, an attempt at subordinating the social and economic demands of the peasantry to the national cause as perceived by it. While an explanation of the fact that it "managed to get the support of this class without doing anything concrete for them" would continue to demand the historian's attention, the documentation of its manoeuvring should be of interest to the readers.

Subaltern Studies III & IV: A Review Article

SUBALTERN STUDIES III*

Kapil Kumar**

Shahid Amin's essay, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-22', the first in Volume III of *Subaltern Studies*, is a product of meticulous research, and at the same time a self-contradictory exercise. Amin makes it clear that his concern is not with 'analysing the attributes of his [Gandhi's] charisma but with how this registered in peasant consciousness' (p 2). This, according to him, is a perspective which is 'somewhat different from the view usually taken of this grand subject' (p 2)—i.e., the relationship between peasants and Gandhi. The aim of the exercise, Amin tells us, is a 'limited one of taking a close look at peasant perceptions of Gandhi by focussing on the trail of stories. . . ' (p 2). The two main issues discussed are the 'location of the Mahatma image within the existing patterns of popular beliefs and the way it informed direct action, often at variance with the standard interpretations of the Congress creed' (p 2).

Gandhi's popularity rested on his 'peasant image' which had been projected by the press, intelligentsia and the dominant social groups during and after the Champaran episode. It was not what he had done in South Africa that was registered in peasant consciousness but his role as a leader who took up the peasants' cause and talked about their grievances and exploitation.¹

Let us begin by examining how peasant consciousness registered the image of the Mahatma. Both perceptions and popular beliefs emerge, exist and operate within specific social and economic relationships. And these popular perceptions and beliefs are also influenced by the class positions and interests of the dominant classes who play a vital role in their emergence, propagation and transmission. This is precisely where Amin is not only ambiguous, but his search for a 'somewhat different perspective' takes him away from social reality and what has been claimed as subaltern history. Amin laboriously links the Mahatma's image with rumour and existing popular beliefs but he fails to delineate the links between the image, the rumours, the agrarian structure and political action. After all, rumours are not supra-historical.

*Ranjit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1984, 327 pp.

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When the peasants of Gorakhpur believed in rumours about Gandhi's *pratap* was it just because these were along the lines of popular beliefs? Amin has cited from other regions in this regard. Whether they 'were the product of popular imagination' or 'very consciously spread by the local agitators', the rumours had gained currency in relation to the exploitative agrarian structure in Champaran (p.6). The exploited peasants saw hope in Gandhi. They perceived and interpreted him in relation to their own economic and social problems. This took place within the pattern of existing popular beliefs, which very often provided the peasant an ideological justification to revolt in the absence of other alternatives. It is not surprising that in many peasant movements in India *babas*, *faqirs* or *sadhus* played a prominent role. We do get evidence of the 'links between rumours about Gandhi's *pratap* and peasant exploitation in areas of Gujarat, Rajputana, Andhra, as well as the neighbouring region of Oudh. These links were there in Gorakhpur as open 'letters appeared in the columns of *Swadesh* highlighting the oppression suffered by peasants in the bigger zamindaris and challenging the presumption of the rajas to be the natural spokesmen of their *praja*' (p.14). Amin informs us: 'The Editor of *Swadesh*, who had himself sought to inculcate an attitude of devotion in the district towards the Mahatma, had thus no hesitation in printing rumours about the latter's *pratap*. It was only when these appeared to *instigate dangerous beliefs and actions*, such as those concerning demands for the *abolition of zamindari, reduction of rents or enforcement of just price at the bazaars*, that the journal came out with *prompt disclaimers*' (p.50; emphasis added).

However, what the editor of *Swadesh* did is repeated by Amin when he ignores the socio-historical basis of the rumours, and writes: 'People in the Gorakhpur countryside believed in these not out of any unquestioning trust in the weekly newspaper but because they accorded with existing beliefs about *marvels and miracles, about right and wrong*' (p.48; emphasis added).

Swadesh, we should add, had a definite motive in propagating such stories and giving respectability to them. For, in the case of a large number of rumours cited the person reporting the happenings was a 'gentleman', a 'special correspondent', a 'respected person', a 'vakil saheb', etc. But *Swadesh* was critical of a zamindar only when he was likely to be an obstacle to the peasants desiring to have Gandhi *darshan* (p.24).

Amin successfully demonstrates the efforts of the 'elite' to mobilise the peasants behind them. However, a generalisation he makes is not a true representation of reality. 'The Brahman thief of Rudrapur village is representative not just of the ordinary village sceptic but of *high-caste opposition to the Gandhian creed*' (p.31; emphasis added). Dashrath Dwivedi, the editor of *Swadesh*, Gauri Shanker Misra, etc., were all brahmans. Consequently, this general observation is erroneous and misleading.

Another question that comes up after reading Amin's contribution is, which sections of the peasantry responded to the rumours? Very often popular beliefs are interpreted by different sections in relation to their day-to-day life. It is possible, and it has happened in history, that the same popular belief has been perceived differently by different social groups to justify or oppose the existing social order. The Peasant War in Germany is one example, Christopher Hill's position regarding three Gods in the English Revolution is another. While examining the role of rumour one has to keep this in mind as well.

Interestingly, the government attributed the violence at Chauri Chaura to the propaganda of 'non-cooperators' and the stories about Gandhi. Amin starts

his paper by citing Dixit, the Committing Magistrate, Chauri Chaura Trials, who talked of many 'miracles' taking place previous to the 'riot'. After listing these miracles in detail Amin's analysis supports the official version. For example, while referring to the punishments meted out by the 'Gandhi Panchayats' of the early 1920s he writes:

However, in the spring of 1921 when *all was charged with magic*, any mental or physical affliction (*kasht*) suffered by persons found guilty of violating panchayat decisions adopted in Gorakhpur villages in the Mahatma's name was often perceived as evidence of Gandhi's extraordinary powers, indeed as something providential and supernatural rather than as a form of chastisement devised by a human agency (p.9; emphasis added)

What needs to be stressed is that not a single 'miracle', 'magic' or rumour listed by Amin is even remotely related to mass initiative or popular action at Chauri Chaura. *Swadesh* cited these happenings, projecting and advocating change through the *pratap* or supernatural powers of the Mahatma, away from the intervention of the popular masses. Yet policemen were the targets of peasant violence at Chauri Chaura. The explanation for this lies not just in the paradox that there 'was no single authorised version of the Mahatma' or the ideas of the peasantry about Gandhi which were 'often at variance with those of the local Congress-Khilafat' leaders. What needs to be also stressed is that the police station was a symbol of peasants' exploitation at the hands of the British and their zamindar allies. The peasants were not fools that they believed in the *pratap* of the Mahatma and the rumours about it and therefore 'attacked' the *thana*. They had specific grievances against the police who, along with the zamindars, were the two main leverages of the power and control apparatus of the British empire in the countryside. Amin's work remains incomplete without any reference to these complexities. Moreover, there was indeed one image of the Mahatma that was registered in peasant consciousness during this period: that the Mahatma was a symbol with which to oppose the oppressor, whoever it was. Everything that was unjust, cruel and oppressive was fought in his name.

R.Gopinath*

David Arnold in his article 'Famine in Peasant Consciousness and Peasant Action' in *Subaltern Studies*, Volume III, studies the 1876-78 famine in Madras, in an attempt 'to determine how peasants perceived and responded to the crisis created by drought, dearth and famine', and further, 'to use the crisis of the famine as a window onto subaltern consciousness and action'.

According to Arnold, even though famine has occurred frequently and on a vast scale in India, the massive body of literature on this subject, which he calls elitist, has ignored peasants' perceptions and reactions to it, since it assumes that peasants are 'passive, fatalistic powerless victims' (p.63). Going beyond food scarcity-centred definitions of famines, Arnold describes famines from the standpoint of the peasants as 'both an extension and intensification of familiar anxieties and hardships, and an event charged with exceptional religious significance and destructive potency' (p.67). The 1876-78 famine was exceptionally extensive both in terms of the area and the size of the population

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affected. This famine, like others which visited the country, did not come without warning; it was the cumulative result of a series of pluviometric shortfalls and bad harvests. Famines have been socially selective in terms of which classes of people they affected; they deepened socio-economic cleavages. This deadly catastrophe is widely featured in Hindu myths and legends; the severe famines embedded in the collective consciousness of the peasantry served as markers in the folk calendar.

According to Arnold, while the famine of 1876-78 began in the official mind only when its effects could be quantified and empirically substantiated, peasants' prognostications about it, expressed in terms of vernacular proverbs, started much earlier. Famines, droughts and similar disasters were attributed by peasants to the non-observance of required rites, the sinfulness of individuals and village communities, the appearance of new unfamiliar technology (e.g., locomotives, telegraph wires, etc.), which disturbed the gods) and the destructive nature of some deities.

The non-fatalistic response of the villagers to phenomena like famines seems to be borne out by their active performance of rites and rituals to appease the anger of the deities to end the period of suffering. Religion was the only language through which the peasant could understand disasters and appropriately respond to them. Initially village solidarity and collective self-mobilisation, cutting across divisions of caste, income and sex were displayed in the peasants' response. However, with the persistence and growth of the famine, this solidarity got eroded. The first lines of division appeared between the raiyats and the landless labourers, the differentiation being based both on economic activity as well as caste. With the heightening of the famine the raiyats often withdrew their customary duties towards 'tied' as well as 'hired' labour. In the sphere of production the raiyats' response was to contract the area cultivated and to revert to subsistence agriculture.

The demands and actions of the rural and urban poor in Madras were premised on the subaltern expectations that in times of shortage those with surplus must help the needy and that the power-holding superordinate classes must be responsive to their needs. Subaltern violence against money-lenders, grain-merchants and officials did not attempt to overthrow them but only sought to remind them that power also connoted responsibility. The weekly market provided the arena for the dissemination of rumours which often led to collective actions such as looting. The famine period saw the highest level of recorded crime in Madras between the 1850s and 1940s. As the famine lengthened collective protest progressively turned into personal anguish and despair. Survival strategies included drastic lowering of food intake, consumption of socially prohibited foodstuffs, distress sales of property, women and children, and migration. Migration was chiefly to Sri Lanka and the plantations of the Western Ghats. The scale of labour migration, according to Arnold, was limited by the large-scale existence of 'tied labour' and the raiyats' prejudice against coolie labour. State intervention, motivated by the fear of the climbing crime rate and labour migration, resulted in an unprecedented contact between the colonial State and the peasantry. This contact was characterised by a high level of mutual suspicion and distrust. With the rains of September 1878 and the receding of the famine, supply resumed although at higher rates, in response to the peasants' credit requirements, and the money-lenders exploited this opportunity to strengthen their hold.

Arnold's sensitivity in handling the subject is demonstrated by his recognition of the changing forms of subaltern reaction, the breakdown of initial village solidarity, the socially selective impact of the famine, the different survival strategies, the nature of the colonial State, etc. The strength of his discussion lies in the constant emphasis on the socially differentiated nature of the impact of the famine and the response to it, and constant reminders that caste divisions and charity served to reinforce the power of the superordinate socio-economic groups.

However, the essay has a few serious lacks. Arnold's contention that the famine of 1876-78 was merely an extension and intensification of familiar anxieties is difficult to accept either in terms of the so-called elitist economic history or by the evidence produced in Arnold's non-elitist subaltern writing. In comparison with pre-famine years, between 1875 and 1878 for the whole of Madras, prices of staple cereals increased by 300 per cent in 1876 and by 200 per cent in 1877. For individual famine districts the price increase was often of the order of 500 per cent and mortality shot up by 600 per cent to 700. Such tremendous price and mortality increases reflect a subsistence crisis of gigantic proportions, which can be termed merely an intensification only by 'reducing the peasants to arithmetic abstractions' (p 62). Arnold's own narrative of the famine years is replete with reference to the breakdown of traditional hierarchies of power, the questioning of the actions of the superordinates by the agricultural labourers, total economic and social dislocation and the breakdown of customary reciprocal unequal relations. One wonders how Arnold, who argues against the writing of famine history in terms of 'statistics of mortality, the number of relief recipients and so forth,' can define the famine crisis which saw a qualitative transformation in rural power relations as a mere 'intensification'.

A history of the subaltern in the famine years can thus in no way be extrapolated for non-crisis periods. Further, the fact that the famines persisted in the rural collective memory appears to be because of the unusualness of the attendant social and political conditions.

Partha Dutta*

In his essay, 'Trade Unions in a Hierarchical Culture: The Jute Workers of Calcutta 1920-50,' Dipesh Chakrabarty sets out to study the consciousness of workers and in doing so raises important questions on ideology and culture. The two important problems raised in this essay are (i) the paradox of a tradition of militant strikes but poor trade union organisation, and (ii) the continuing importance of the 'outsider' in labour organisations. In some well-researched sections Chakrabarty convincingly shows that these two characteristics remained overwhelmingly important in the period he has chosen to study.

The novelty of Chakrabarty's essay does not lie in the problems he raises, these have been fairly common in the writings of other labour historians and one gets repeated references to them in official documents and files. The novelty lies in an attempt to push deeper and obtain answers from a point beyond which mainstream writing on labour has refused to look. The 'orthodox' viewpoint on the above-mentioned problematic has recently been reinstated by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya. 'The failure to generate leadership from the rank and file of workers', according to Bhattacharya, was due to 'absence of literate workers', a

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'culturally bilingual intelligentsia', the 'multistructural character of the economy', etc.² Chakrabarty does not discount these reasons, instead he shows skilfully how these notions informed the thinking of both Communist and non-Communist labour leaders who set about 'educating' the workers according to his or her political inclinations. In spite of this, the workers seemed notoriously difficult to organise into trade unions.

Most labour histories would stop here, having established the grounds for the workers' recalcitrance. But Chakrabarty pushes further—into the realms of working class culture. If trade unions, as bourgeois democratic organisations with elected leaders, failed to solve the problem of 'power and authority' within organisations, then the workers did, argues Chakrabarty, by recognising the 'outsider' as their representative, not because he was elected but because he had the visible signs of being their master. The culture that informed the consciousness of workers, according to Chakrabarty, was a feudal one which recognised ostentatious signs of authority (the car, high social positions, a record of sacrifices for workers) and which made the 'outsider' their 'natural' leader. This was however not 'blind' obedience but based on a shrewd appraisal of the workers' own position, and which often entailed violence against the 'outsider'. Given the nature of this relationship, a worker was loyal only to a leader—not to an organisation—and frequently factional struggles at the top would spell an end to the 'formal' trade union. For Chakrabarty, the irony lay in the fact that the Bengali left, by being oblivious to this feudal culture, remained 'trapped'. . . within the same culture they would have liked to see destroyed. Ideology in this case was not enough to erase the ties of power encoded in culture' (p.152).

Most people would see in this a strikingly original argument, in which the worker is not seen as a victim of various impersonal forces like 'character of economy', 'illiteracy', etc. Mercifully the reader is spared the implicit condescension or patronage which comes unconsciously with this kind of argument. Instead the worker is seen as an active maker of his own destiny. Yet Chakrabarty fails to analyse one important aspect of worker organisation—the jobber- (or *sardar*-) led units in the jute mills. This omission is all the more surprising given the fact that Chakrabarty has himself spoken eloquently on the continuing importance of the jobber elsewhere. Coupled with this, the existence of *dasturs* or customs of the mill areas, which according to R N Gilchrist, the Labour Intelligence Officer of Bengal in the twenties, ' . . . in some cases. . . [were] quite as effective as trade union rules', is also not probed.³ Is it not likely that workers who were active in trade unions during strike periods turned back to these 'informal' organisations during times of industrial peace? After all it is a fact that the jobber could provide succour and sustenance for a worker more effectively than any 'outsider', however philanthropic his motives. In fact the problem arises from Chakrabarty's attempt to understand the employer/worker relationship as one encompassed in a Master/Slave dialectic (after Hegel). This necessarily omits the zones of grey between opposites which are crucial to the understanding of the consciousness of the working class. Surely the experience of struggle in the twenties would have contributed to a changed state of relations between employers and workers in the forties, and the continuities that Chakrabarty points out perhaps need to be more qualified.

Lastly, Chakrabarty's attempt at characterising the workers' culture as 'hierarchical', by which he presumably means 'feudal', is also open to question. Are not all cultures hierarchical? Besides, the problem of 'representation' even in

capitalist cultures remains extremely acute as the experience of the twentieth century shows. This is why Lenin's contribution remains crucial to this day. It would have been perhaps worthwhile if Chakrabarty had pointed out more clearly the specificities of this 'feudal' culture and the differences it has with capitalist culture from which trade unions derive their inspiration. It is worthwhile stressing these aspects not because they take away anything from Chakrabarty's argument, but because if pursued they may add to what is an extremely stimulating and provocative essay.

Prakash Chandra Upadhyay*

The sweep of the magical impact that Gandhi had in the making of the modern Indian State and its ideological structures of legitimation and control, or the influence he exercised in the mental and physical activities of the Indian people while they were entering the participatory domain of nationalist political struggle or getting affected by it, can be conveyed with the help of the two popular metaphors in common use for him—'The Mahatma' (The Great Soul) and 'Bapu' ('The Father' of the nation). Whereas the sway of the term 'Mahatma' symbolised in the personality of Gandhi the appropriation of all the positive traits of the saviours of Indian culture and civilisation expressed through mythical stories about its 'saints' and 'sages' (or *rishis* and *maharishis*) of the past, the status of 'Bapu' makes him appear as the sole father-figure of modern Indian nationhood. This image and interpretation of Gandhi, however, has its own problems.

If the history and politics of any society cannot be reduced to a few great personalities only, then any serious academic work on Gandhi too has to encounter the myriads of myths, dogmas or fads attached to his stature either simply to eulogise him as a saintly leader and a holy statesman (done mostly by his friends and followers) or to capitalise on him as an ideological ploy of dominant coalitional State apparatus (by presenting the State philosophy as the only carrier of the national popular heritage left by Gandhi) in order to legitimise the existing system—an exercise usually expertised by the ideologues of the ruling party and establishment intellectuals and even by those who are influenced by the behavioural functional school of American political sociology and psychology, but who have utilised Gandhism as an ideological weapon of criticism against the statist non-aligned State policy in general and the anti-American imperialist section of the Indian left in particular. At times such Gandhian-appearing critical exercise takes the form of the pre-science movement or the so-called grassroot level political movement financed or supported by voluntary organisations. However, even the left political critiques of Gandhi suffer at times from the dogmatic distortions of one-sided polemical discourse.

The one-dimensional panegyrist myth-making or the debunking of Gandhi has been possible not only by the nature of the political positions that Gandhi took in support of the Congress right-wingers vis-a-vis their conflict with the left-wingers on the issue of labour, the peasantry or the need for a socialist orientation of the national movement, but to a great extent also because one can find in Gandhi's writings what one likes to uphold or condemn *a priori*. Such *a priori* selectivity in interpreting Gandhi therefore makes him appear simultaneously as a diplomat, a spiritualist, a naturopath, a feminist, a socialist

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and a total revolutionary without any considerations of the historicity of the nature of Gandhian intervention. His ideology thus becomes for them a classless expression or a supra-class paradigm of the national movement, representing equally the interests of all the classes, as if by an act of providence. In reaction to such establishment-oriented interpretations of Gandhi, the left critiques also thus become polemically motivated by its opposition and thereby interested only in proving that all that Gandhi said and did was nothing more than the evolving of a shrewd strategy and political programme of the Indian bourgeoisie within the dominant traditional Hindu mainstream of India's popular culture and consciousness expressed in terms of religion, caste, etc. The essence of Gandhism in such a critique was reduced to the level of political laymanship capable of mobilising and manipulating the political popular classes of India at will, with the help of the religious discourse. Despite locating the historical class essence of the Gandhian programme, though in reductionist and simplistic terms, the left critique always remained incapable of explaining how the connection and mediations between the evolution of the Gandhian strategy of national movement and its appropriation, assimilation or cooption within the bourgeois framework was historically arrived at. This problem remains unresolved even today.

In the above context of polarised interpretations of Gandhi, the happiest note of Partha Chatterjee's intervention, 'Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society', is that his own critique of Gandhism is situated outside the polemical context of the debate between pro- and anti-Gandhi camps. Another positive feature of his analysis of Gandhi is his keen awareness about the style of the language and politics of Gandhi, which could be interpreted differently by different people. In this respect, he begins his interpretation of Gandhi by quoting from him: 'My language is aphoristic, it lacks precision. It is therefore open to several interpretations' (Gandhi's discussion with Dharmadar, cited in p. 153). Thus the possibilities of equally valid, competing and contrasting interpretations of Gandhi is not ruled out in Chatterjee's framework of analysis.

The keynote of Chatterjee's intervention is to study Gandhi's critique of Western Civil Society (or Gandhism as such) in the background of the theoretical contributions made by some prominent scholars. In this perspective he tries to pattern his interpretation of Gandhi after the theoretical insights derived from the ideas of Gramsci (about the relationship between the fundamental classes and the 'people nation', the achievement of hegemony by the creation of a 'national popular' consensus; passive revolution, etc., p.153); Edward W. Said (about Orientalism that shows how the post-Enlightenment age produced a body of knowledge or discipline 'by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period' (p. 154); and Anwar Abdel Malek (about the utility of concepts like 'problematic' and 'thematic').

Coming to the evolution of nationalist thinking among the orientals, Chatterjee finds that the domination of the anti-Western nationalist tradition by the all-encompassing parameters of the Orientalist umbrella of domination itself becomes the fundamental contradiction of nationalism in Eastern (or Oriental) societies. Thus, while the problematic of nationalist thought and activity appears 'exactly the reverse of that in Orientalism', i.e., the process of the development of the East also as an active, autonomous and sovereign subject-making, but 'at the level of thematic nationalist thought accepts and adopts the

same essentialist conception based on the distinction between the East and the West and hence the same objectifying procedures of knowledge constructed in the post-Enlightenment age of Western science' (p 155). Thus even the nationalist opposition to colonial rule occurs within the same body of knowledge that is shaped, reshaped, and indeed contained, limited and corrupted by the same dominating framework of Orientalism. Such a nationalist paradigm 'corresponds to the very structures of power that nationalist thought seeks to repudiate' (pp. 155-156). This, according to Chatterjee, constitutes the fundamental contradiction of the post-Enlightenment liberal rational creed of elite nationalism in the East (or the Third World in general). In this theoretical domain his contention is that Gandhian intervention, while succeeding in subverting the structure of elite nationalism with the help of his critique of it which 'arises from an epistemic standpoint situated outside the thematic of post-Enlightenment thought' (p 176), at the same time 'provided an opportunity for the political appropriation of popular classes within the evolving forms of the new Indian State' (p 156) which was ultimately patterned after the Western nation-State under capitalism. Thus, he considers it inappropriate to regard Gandhi as a pre-industrial leader or even the organic intellectual of the peasantry, i.e., 'the peasant intellectual'. Despite the inherently 'peasant communal' character of its critique of civil society, the correct framework for understanding Gandhian ideology as a whole is still that of the historical development of elite nationalist thought in India' (p 176). Thus, unlike Russian populism, Gandhism cannot be regarded as a peasant ideology. It was at best a strategy for the 'political appropriation of subaltern classes by the bourgeoisie aspiring for hegemony in the new nation-State' (p 176). That is why Chatterjee regards Gandhian intervention in Indian nationalist politics as a 'moment of manoeuvre' in his recent work.⁴

The basic reasons for the Gandhian ascendancy in the Indian nationalist tradition can be located in the domain of his moral opposition to everything with which progress in modern Western civilisations is identified, i.e., to its science and technology, machines and industry, consumerism and property, self-interest and self-indulgence of market culture, parliamentary politics, the educational system, etc. It is demonstrated by Chatterjee that the fundamental cause of India's enslavement according to Gandhi was rooted in its moral failure to stick to its age-old civilisational norms, not in scientific and technological backwardness. On the contrary, any initiative in learning and applying Western science or technology was likely to further strengthen the entrenched network of colonial bondage. Even after Independence, according to Gandhi, such learning (aping) would lead to a kind of English rule without Englishmen (not in linguistic but in 'machine' civilisational sense).

Gandhi loathed scientific rationality because it would challenge the social/intellectual basis of India's belief system. He preferred 'instinctive faith over scientific reasoning' (p 171), because the scientific quest to solve every problem would arrogate man either to insanity or reduce him to impotency (p 170). 'Mere intellect makes one insane or unmanly. . . only one thing will save us from these and that is faith', said Gandhi (cited p 170). In this way, during the heyday of his Harijan Andolan in 1934, he went on to characterise the devastating earthquake in Bihar as 'divine chastisement for the sin of untouchability' (p. 171), without, however, explaining as to why this took an equal toll on everyone including the untouchables. When some (among others, Tagore) argued against such reasoning Gandhi simply said, 'religions-minded

people everywhere believe in such relationship of earthquakes to sinful deeds of man' (cited p. 172).

Gandhi upheld the cultural and economic stagnation of India as a deliberate choice of India's moralist ancestors, saints and sages 'It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet', argued Gandhi (cited p. 158). Without specifying the reasons for the success of some of India's ancient kingdoms, Babur's victory, or Sirajudaula's defeat at the hands of Clive, the technological stagnation of India was justified by Gandhi as the moral necessity of India's past survival and present revival. The only difference this notion appears to have with Hindu common sense at large (in India) is that it does not brag about Indian excellence in every field of knowledge, including science and technology during its ancient days, as exemplified in the 'Pushp Viman' (flower-like plane) technology, that was presumably stolen by the alien rulers, particularly the British, and which thereby speaks about their application of it today.

Gandhi's critique of the West was directed not only against its economic, scientific and technological spirit. It was equally loathsome of the institutional and ideological arrangements. Thus, he regarded the parliamentary representative system as a 'sterile woman and a prostitute' (cited p. 163) where Parliament itself, instead of being sovereign, changes allegiance from one set of masters (ministers) to the other, depending on who was the most powerful. He characterised their newspapers as purely unprincipled, because of their always changing views without any consistent principles and a morality that was abhorrent to his own creed of truthfulness. A leader could arrogate himself to power under such a system because of his ability to throw up parties, receptions or demagoguery than by upholding high moral standards. Similarly, he found law and politics in Western bourgeois democracy as complementary to the structures of inequality and injustice. Finally, Gandhi stoutly opposed the secularised nature of the Western educational appeal because it ignored ethical values, rationalised the division of mental and manual labour and led more to a confident and active self-indulgence in luxury than to the discovery of truth.

On this basis Chatterjee thinks that Gandhi provided a 'total moral critique of the fundamental aspects of [Western] civil society' (p.166). It was universalist in appeal and was purported to be applicable to India and the West alike. Instead of being a reaction against the religion of the West, it was directed against their irreligiosity which occurred due to their total embourgeoisification in the post-Enlightenment tradition of economic, scientific and technological rationality. Thus, 'Gandhi', according to Chatterjee, 'does not even think within the thematic of nationalism' (p. 167), nor did he operate 'at all within the problematic of nationalism' (p.166). As opposed to the political power-oriented Western mode of reasoning he advocated the moral and spiritual 'force of the soul' (p. 167) as the only way to India's and world liberation. He advocated a kind of Rousseauvian popular sovereignty as a 'state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler' (cited p. 165). Similarly, in opposition to the competition and calculation-oriented social order of market individualism of the West, he justified the communal order of the four-fold Varna specialisation which, according to him, would ultimately restore a perfect system of harmony, reciprocity and exchange without the acquisitive spirit of competitive morality.

Though total and universal, the Gandhian critique of the West, according to Chatterjee, was neither historically adequate nor logically sound. Essentially inspired by the writings of Carpenter, Ruskin and Tolstoy, even their interpretations by Gandhi was eclectic, selective and ahistorical. For example, Ruskin's writings, despite his moral protest against rising capitalistic ethics, was essentially a modernist critique in which any advance towards the growth of scientific knowledge and rationality was appreciated (p 175). In most sympathetic terms such ahistorical 'idealisation of the pre-capitalist economic social relations' (p. 173) by Gandhi, according to Chatterjee, can be characterised as 'romanticist'. When compared to the populism and economic romanticism of the Russian Narodniks, Chatterjee finds Gandhian intervention (like that of the Russian populists) a 'big step forward', in the sense that it 'highlighted the democratic demand of small producers, chiefly the peasants' (p. 173). But, in the theoretical perspective of modern civilisation and its progress, this critique of Gandhi according to him would still be 'reactionary' because there is not only a romantic nostalgia for a medieval world, but also an 'attempt to measure the new society with the old patriarchal yardstick, the desire to find models in old orders and traditions, which are totally unsuited to the changed economic situations' (Lenin cited by Chatterjee in p 173).

However, the Gandhian ideology was still of 'monumental significance' (p. 184) not because it appeared as the philosophy of India's most popular class, i.e., the peasant, but because it served the rising Indian bourgeoisie as a philosophical/political strategy of acquiring hegemony over the Indian national movement. Only due to this fact was it projected at a world scale as an alternative to Lenin and Mao. Formed and shaped by the experience of the national movement it 'opened up the historical possibility for its appropriation into evolving structures of Indian State' (p 176). But this intervention and the contribution of Gandhi was not without contradictions. In fact, Gandhism in this context, according to Chatterjee, was 'a nationalism which stood upon a critique of the very idea of civil society, a movement supported by the bourgeoisie which rejected the idea of progress, the ideology of a political organisation fighting for the creation of a modern national State which accepted at the same time the ideal of an enlightened anarchy' (p 178). The contradictions of Gandhism are, therefore, inherent not only in its utility for the bourgeois appropriation of the peasant classes, but also in the method of the transformation of its moral critique of Western bourgeois civil society into a political strategy of the Indian bourgeoisie. And, it is predominantly in the realms of the political ideological competition for power and hegemony that Gandhi's agitational politics becomes the natural strategic creed of India's dominant classes.

Satyagraha and non-violence are the two key pillars of Gandhian agitational politics. Satyagraha in Gandhian agitational politics, according to Chatterjee, was a 'negative consciousness' highlighting the 'modes of peasant-communal resistance to oppressive State authority' (p 181). Here we find no difference between the satyagrahis as leaders and the led. But the experiences of the mass satyagraha during the first non-cooperation movement made Gandhi and the Indian capitalist class aware about the necessity of necessary modifications in its operational mode so as to bring it in line with the essential norms of bourgeois political and legal institutional niceties. In order to survive as the bourgeois political strategy the style of Gandhian agitational ethics of resistance needed to discover and reconcile to a complementary political morality of obedience.

Thus, Gandhi stipulated the need to change mass satyagraha into individual satyagraha, because the masses, having once been thrown into the movement, do not necessarily retreat (or remain non-violent against violent authorities) and respect the petty niceties of bourgeois constitutionalism.

In the above political context, therefore, the strategy of individual satyagraha was worked out, which emphasised the so-called functionality of social divisions such as leaders and masses, State and civil society or resistance and obedience in the process of ascending bourgeois hegemony. 'He only is able and attains the right to offer civil disobedience who has known how to offer voluntary and deliberate obedience to the laws of the State', said Gandhi (cited p 183). Like any other elite leadership (distrusting the masses) Gandhi also said that the masses 'have no mind, no premeditation They act in frenzy. They repent quickly' (cited p 185). To this was added the code of so-called Hindu non-violent morality (?) which would work as an ideological bulwark against any mass upsurge. In this way Gandhism became an ideology of the bourgeois national movement, where the decision-making apparatus, instead of being democratic and consensual, was monopolised by 'few true satyagrahis', i.e., the leaders (p 186). Thus, Chatterjee observes, 'we get within the ideological unity of Gandhism as a whole the conception of a national framework of politics in which the peasants are mobilised but do not participate, of a nation of which they are a part but a national State from which they are forever distanced' (p. 194)

However, it should be noted here that this kind of the characterisation of Gandhi and the Indian national movement is not something entirely new or original. The originality of Chatterjee lies in the application of the above concepts and terminology to the study of nationalist thought and not in the discovery of new facts or a theory about it. In fact the essence of his theoretical and political positions about Gandhi and Indian nationalism were established long ago in the tradition of the left-wing critiques of Indian nationalism and Gandhi. The novelty of Chatterjee's essay is in the application or introduction of concepts like 'passive revolution', 'orientalism', 'thematic', 'problematic', etc., in the field of the political theory of Indian nationalist thought. But, despite the richness of doing so, it appears that instead of utilising purely logical or ahistorical concepts like these (which have only limited explanatory significance and which can only play a supportive role to the already existing Marxist terminology) the traditional Marxist explanation of it with the help of a historical category like the theory of the rise of capitalist mode of production in the West leading to colonialism or reaching its highest peak in imperialism, and the anti-colonial nationalist mobilisational pattern in the colonised world leading to bourgeois nationalism and its concomitant contradictions (for example, in India), or its opposite revolutionary socialist alternative under the leadership of the Communist party (for instance in China), perhaps captures the reality of the world politics, ideology and its problems in far more precise terms without losing the specific historicity of colonialism and imperialism (including the specific nature of orientalist discourse under it) or the differentiated structures bourgeois communist movements, programmes, leaderships and their social base in the colonised and newly independent Third World countries.

On the contrary, for example, the use of a concept like 'Orientalism' and its inherently dominational motivation located in the entire body of post-Enlightenment tradition of the growth of knowledge in the West conflates everything including the liberating mission of historical materialism or the

nationalist tradition of the East into one single monolithic logical whole called Orientalism, thereby ending up in totally complicating the analysis of conflict, contradiction and the nature of philosophical, ideological and economic exchange between the East and West to the point of historical incomprehensibility. The process of the development of the East also as a specific subject of history itself is denied in the conceptual sway of Orientalism. Also denied here is the status of a new revolutionary epistemological break (in theory and practical politics) for the liberation of the whole of humanity to Marxism. For example, Edward Said says 'Marx's economic analyses are perfectly fitted thus to a standard Orientalist undertaking . . . Marx's theoretical socio-economic views became submerged in this classically standard image (or Orientalism) . . . Every writer on the Orient, from Renan to Marx (ideologically speaking) or from the most vigorous scholars (Lance and Sacy) to the most powerful imaginations (Flaubert and Nerval) saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction or even redemption' ⁵ Thus, implicit in such sweep of Orientalism and the need of conscious opposition to it is also the uneasiness of being governed by any segment of its theoretical or practical structure of knowledge. Because it implies in it that the submission to any paradigm of the post-Enlightenment ideological, institutional and scientific body of knowledge (which originated in Western Europe) cannot but ultimately lead to the domination of the East by the West. Thus every Western construction of the East by the West becomes part of Orientalism and every aspect of Orientalism ultimately has 'dominating' motivation and objectivity. It also implies that all Western knowledge or its institutional borrowing corrupts the East just because it is Western; a notion that Gandhi also upheld while providing an alternative to it in terms of pre-industrial Indian values, especially the utopia of 'Ram Rajya' (explained adequately in Chatterjee's essay). All this is said and done in the critique of 'Orientalism' without providing any blueprint of progress against the post-Enlightenment tradition of knowledge. Finally, it should also be noted here that the very critique of Orientalism itself, as provided by Said, falls within the same advancing structure of knowledge in the West, and this is duly admitted by him when he accepts the utility of the insights from the writings of Foucault, Gramsci, Raymond Williams, etc., all of whom were equally the product of the same post-Enlightenment tradition of social knowledge. And, in this sense, Said's contribution is as much part of the thematic of Orientalism as was that of others including Marx's.

Thus, the conceptualisation of the entire post-Enlightenment tradition of the growth of knowledge as 'Orientalism' is highly ambiguous and is incapable of capturing the specific domains of historical process. The range of historical reality is too complex to be explained through the limited analytical vision and utility of Orientalism. Further, the admission of the fact that the West (Europe) for a long time in history has/had been the vanguard centre of the most modern ideas and institutions or science, technology and progress does not necessarily imply the subjection of the East to the West or even the degradation of its personality and dignity. Historically, the objective outcome of it was both liberating and dominating (for itself and the East) and even generally progressive. For Western ideas and institutions or movements of nationalism, democracy and socialism in the East too had an urge of liberation. It was far more true of the nationalist alternatives of social/or people's democracies, which appropriated the anti-feudal and anti-capitalist spirit of national transformation during the anti-colonial phase of national liberation movement. However, the bourgeois

nationalist course, while being liberating (in political sense), remained at the same time dependent not only on the imperialist forces (for its survival) but it was also incapable of solving the problem of its people or the national development. In this sense the neo-imperialist grip of the bourgeois paradigm of Europe did help in some way in producing the Orient politically, sociologically and economically. Finally, it should be borne in mind that irrespective of the basic ideological polemic of Said's work against the Western paradigm of knowledge (about the East), there is no escape for the East from the modern alternatives of survival in terms of capitalism and socialism. Chatterjee himself, for instance, shows how Gandhi's moral critique of the Western machine civilisation, ideas and institutions, despite falling outside the thematic of Orientalist discourse on nationalism, ultimately had very few choices, i.e., either of the utopian reification of pre-industrial obscurantism defined in terms of Ram Rajya or to let its practical political appropriation by the forces of capitalism or socialism. Thus, in the practical domain of political power struggle the nationalist leadership had to choose between the political strategy of radical social transformation (called 'war of position' which was capable of launching a frontal assault on the fortress of traditional domination by the hitherto ruling classes) and a relative status-quo (called the 'passive revolution' which could lead to the legitimisation of late capitalist social order). These specific historical complexities of social change thus appear beyond the analytical pale of Orientalism. Therefore, in this context, it would have been far more appropriate if Chatterjee would have stated at the outset that these concepts have only a limited scope in capturing the crisis of bourgeois nationalist thought and leadership (in India). Otherwise, the pure academic obsession with every novel theoreticism at times might result in losing the imagination for being even alert to basic historical specificities and its complexities.

However, one cannot but say that in the field of modern Indian political theory, it is to the credit of Chatterjee that he has widened the scope of studying nationalist thought in another meaningful way with the help of these concepts. This study helps us to understand the way in which Gandhi's moral critique of the West, and especially its strategic political spirit in mobilising the popular classes in the struggle against British imperialism was operationalised essentially under the bourgeois expediencies of struggle, retreat and compromises. He does not however elaborate the institutionalising pattern of bourgeois modalities in the domain of Gandhian politics and philosophy in terms of an adequate conceptualisation of its mediating and connecting networks of bourgeois hegemonic structures. In the context of Gandhi's pre-colonial alternative to the Western State and civil society, Chatterjee could also have established a proper linkage between the revivalistic nature inherent in every framework of Gandhian critique and the potentialities of its being transformed into the communal consciousness that has gripped India (of yesterday and today).

Sanjay Sharma*

In his essay, 'Adivasi Assertion in South Gujarat: The Devi Movement of 1922-23', in *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. III, David Hardiman analyses the complex relationship between British policy, Gandhian nationalism and subaltern activity. The essay is remarkable in its simplicity, clarity and readability. It

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deals with the adivasis inhabiting the Ranimahals region in south Gujarat where in 1922 many adivasis were reported to be possessed by a Devi. The commands of the Devi expressed through mediums covered a range of issues pertaining to abstinence from liquor (*daru* and toddy), vegetarianism, cleanliness and boycott of Parsi liquor dealers and landlords. Very soon the Devi started 'telling the adivasis to take vows in Gandhi's name, to wear khadi cloth and to attend nationalist schools' (p. 198). This then becomes the meeting ground for the sociologist, psychoanalyst and the historian.

Hardiman argues that spirit possession in many societies is an expression of subversive motions of the oppressed classes. In many cases it acts as a safety valve, ensuring the continuation of existing dominant structures. However, he goes on to show how the dividing line between the purely ritual and more positive resistance can be easily crossed. Till the 1860s customs regulated land cultivation and drinking practices and there was 'little exploitation of one adivasi by another' (p. 201). No doubt the adivasis were exploited by high-caste moneylenders and Parsi liquor dealers, but they were not so rapacious. The creation of ownership rights on land and the Bombay Abkari Act of 1878 together led to a differentiation of tribal peasantry, a consolidation of the powers of Parsi liquor sellers and an enormous increase in excise revenue for the colonial State. The adivasis, squeezed from all sides, were moreover blamed for their lot by colonial officials for being 'morally depraved' and 'illiterate'. 'The colonial panacea for the pauperisation of the adivasi was thus education' (p. 205). The spread of education led to the emergence of young educated adivasis, many of whom became social reformers within their communities in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The stage was thus set in the 1920s for the Devi movement.

The Devi movement was an assertion by the adivasis in which they demonstrated a remarkable ability to differentiate, reject and appropriate interests. The commands of the Devi did not ask for a boycott of Vaniya and Brahman exploiters. By adopting the 'pure' way of life of high-caste Hindus the adivasis sought equality of status and thereby attempted to change the relationship of dominance and subordination. On the other hand, by refusing to drink and work for anyone connected with liquor trade, the adivasis were trying to break those economic bonds which bound them to the Parsis. 'Renouncing liquor was in this respect a far more effective act of assertion than resorting to subterfuge, such as illicit distillation, for the act of "giving up" had behind it a great moral force' (p. 219).

Hardiman argues effectively that the theories of 'Sanskritisation' (M.N. Srinivas) and 'Revitalisation' (Edward Jay), because of their ahistorical nature, prove inadequate in capturing change and conflict in a reformist movement like the Devi movement. Millenarian and messianic movements have received more attention so far, and Hardiman's focus on a movement which was non-violent, democratic and social reformist is very significant. However, Hardiman's treatment of popular religion leaves much to be desired. He does not tell us about the specificities and the historicity of popular religion in this region. Spirit mediums and possession cults have a logic of their own which have to be situated in a particular cultural context. No doubt they are subversive in nature and express deep-rooted socio-economic grievances of the oppressed. Nevertheless, it has to be explained as to why this particular form is chosen by the adivasis to give vent to their grievances. Is the form adopted interchangeable with any other 'medium' or 'bearer' to express protest and change? Can the form

adopted be reduced to the status of a mere carrier, expressing discontents which are *a priori* assumed to be more real and more important? After all is not Gandhi raised to the level of the Devi in adivasi consciousness? Does not Gandhi come to stand in a particular relationship to the Devi within adivasi consciousness? This also ties up with the sharp distinction made by Hardiman between the Devi movement and messianic movements. Does the perception of Gandhi indicate the dormant tendencies and urges for a messianic or prophetic leader in an otherwise highly democratic movement? Moreover, an unqualified characterisation of the movement as 'democratic' causes theoretical uneasiness.

However, Hardiman's delineation of the long-term consequences of the Devi movement and the character of Gandhian nationalism is not without merit. For the Gandhian nationalists, the aspect of self-purification (*atma shuddhi*) was the most important feature of the movement. Indeed they took little time to regard this as 'their' success. For many Gandhians the Devi movement appeared as an act of divine providence, for it seemed that at one stroke the adivasis had "purified" their way of life in accord with Gandhi's teachings' (p.225). But the adivasis knew what their interests were and that is why they refused to resume working for the Parsis and Muslims in spite of Vallabh Bhai Patel and Kasturba Gandhi's exhortations. The limitations of Gandhian social change, where the causal stress is on individual reform, are clearly revealed. However, in a particular context reformism can also have a revolutionary potential and content. Although the 'democratic' Devi movement lost its momentum soon, a long-term alliance between nationalists and 'rich' adivasi peasants emerged. This was not without any positive results. Parsis and high-caste Hindu landlords did lose their former all-dominating status over a period of time. Hardiman therefore very rightly cautions against any kind of romanticisation of the movement.

One could perhaps end by mentioning that Hardiman glosses over certain other crucial questions which his own evidence throws up. The boycott of liquor by adivasis was directed towards Parsis and Muslim sellers. The religious angle of the act is not explored at all. Moreover, his discussion of the role of drink in adivasi life is too generalised and would be valid for any tribal society. Its specificity in the adivasi life of the region has not been brought out.

P.K.Dutta *

'Encounters and Calamities: The History of a North Indian Qasba in the Nineteenth Century' is one of the more adventurous ventures of the subaltern historians. Writing in a context in which the 'facts' of historical research are increasingly being approached as 'texts', Pandey examines the writing of history itself as a point of entry into the ways in which different groups look at their world. The material shows evidence of painstaking research, and is written and organised fluently. The results are exciting, even though there may be differences regarding the range and kinds of questions posed.

The essay deals with basically three historical narratives, written in the Qasba of Mubarakpur at different periods, the boundaries of which overlap, and together amount to nearly a century-and-a-half of the colonial period (from roughly the 1800s to the 1930s). The official narrative is presented for the purpose of providing the colonial point of reference with which to measure differences with the other two narratives. The two documents, consisting of a

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historical narrative written by a zamindar in the 1880s, and a diary penned by a weaver in the 1930s, are the real concern of this essay. Using a comparative method that fixes similarities and divergences, Pandey's general enquiry centers on the different ideas of community and their mutual relationships that these two groups represented by the documents reveal.

Pandey's essay represents a departure from the general run of subaltern historiography—especially in its more uplifted, theoretical moods—by acknowledging the presence of British colonialism as a serious factor in the period they were running the country. He examines its living power in the consciousness of its subjects, by tackling the complicated relations between them from the viewpoint of the ruled. For instance, Pandey shows that while both Ali Hasan, the zamindar, and the British acknowledge the crucial importance of colonial officialdom in handling riot situations, the former also emphasises the interventions by community leaders. The more interesting part of this relationship concerns, on the one hand, the ways in which the perception of colonialism changes: Hasan's story gives to the colonial presence in the early nineteenth century an importance that is not borne out by official reports of that period, and on the other, the contradictory ways in which colonialism is perceived at the same point in time. Abdul Majid the weaver, while declaring his reverence for Lord Kitchener, condemns in the same breath, Muslims who acted as prosecution witnesses for sending other Muslims to jail for their role in non-cooperation.

The thrust of this essay is engaged in problematising the notion of consciousness. This is its most exciting contribution. There is a clear disavowal here of treating consciousness, particularly subaltern consciousness, either as a homogenous body of attitudes and ideas or as a system of tensions explicable by simple applications of structuralist principles. There is firstly, in the relationships drawn between the zamindar and *julaha* consciousness, a successful attempt to examine differences between groups in the understanding of their social experience. This area is interesting by itself. However, it does not really transgress the boundaries of commonsensical observation. After all, each social group is bound to have its own relations and views regarding society at large. What is original, as far as historical studies in our country is concerned, is a delineation of the complex, disjunct and multi-faceted nature of consciousness itself. This is apparent in the ambiguous relationship to colonial authority outlined above. Central to Pandey's analysis is the coexistence of heterogeneous notions of the community. At times of outside threat (as in the case of dacoity raids) the Qasba acts as a single community; communal riots, on the other hand, reveal a different idea of the community, and even within communal consciousness there occur, in the case of certain riots and their aftermaths, divisions between *bade log* and *chote log*. Again, the acceptance of organic, emotive links with British rule (as in Abdul Majid's possibly exaggerated but nevertheless honest declaration of collective grief at Lord Kitchener's death) indicates a different idea of the community in its relations with State power, from the simultaneously asserted wish for '*suraj*' (i.e., *swaraj*).

Though exciting, Pandey's explorations tend to be confined to the observational. This is possibly an outcome of the near exclusive concentration on the logic of sameness/difference dictated by the comparative method. More attention needed to be given to the internal relations between different aspects of consciousness. For instance, how subservience to British rule and the quest for '*suraj*' telescoped together, lived as parts of the same reflex. To amplify on this

particular question, how do different ideas of community qualify each other or, if they exist as separate categories, by what relationship are they held together? It is not enough to say that a consciousness may simultaneously hold different ideas about what constitutes a community at different points of time and contexts. The general problem then would be to unravel the different kinds of logic by which these contradictory elements are lived as aspects of the same life. This would involve the deployment of a larger array of analytical tools including the possible use of analogy, metaphor, absence/presence, etc.

All this in turn may, in fact should, lead to an explanation that includes an understanding of the culture of its subjects. It is true that Pandey offers the idea of 'izzat' allied to religious codes, as the motivating force behind the response to colonialism. But this begs many questions. Is honour a self-explanatory and singular idea? Nor is it conceivable that a single cultural reflex surrounds their actions, especially when their conceptions are so fragmented. Besides, the finality of this explanation deprives the contribution of the context in developing the range and character of cultural motivations. For instance, the question of history writing itself could have been examined: why do the actors of this essay turn to writing history (or simply remembering the past) when they do, what does it represent vis-a-vis the traditions of historiography if any existed?—in short, examining the phenomenon of entering into a conscious, narrative relationship with the past as a part of their culture and context.

Pandey's explanation raises a serious political problem as well. Is making the statement that whenever people are engaged in conflict they are acting from a desire to preserve their honour, saying very much politically? Can honour be detached from political values? By Pandey's logic, a local hoodlum burning Sikhs to preserve the honour of his leader's memory, and a trade unionist fighting off police lathis, would ultimately amount to an affirmation of the same value. This may be doing fairly crude injustice to the spirit of Pandey's analysis (which is far from making the same kind of statement), but it does dramatise a basic problem of negotiating categories. The subalternists have successfully pointed out the undeniable relationship between consciousness and the historical moment: the fact that in nineteenth and twentieth-century India, collective self-conceptions are in the process of formation and development. In this essay Pandey shows how the jularhas changed the character of their community in relationship to both other communities and themselves. This is an important formulation. But where do we go from here? The subalternists have necessarily relied on the self-definitions of the different collectivities involved. The problem is that it begs the fundamental political question, especially if one is a Marxist, how do we negotiate between our categories and 'theirs'? How can we characterise 'them' in a way that takes into account the gut-level cultural responses involved, while appropriating these to our categories?—a process of questioning which might throw up pointers to ways in which we can effectively intervene in the formation of 'other' consciousnesses.

In any case the lack of political discrimination produces specific problems for this essay. For one, it leads to a populist understanding of the idea of community: since all these ideas exist only as variants of the idea of community, they all reflect the same energetic spirit of honour. The consequence of such an assertion is that Pandey does not consider the phenomenon of communalism, which is so evident in his subject matter that includes a fair amount of communal riots and identities. The absence of this consideration makes the essay poorer both in its inability to establish a firmer connection

with what is happening today, as well as coming to grips with the relationship between the mind and the moment. Pandey does make some important observations. In the 1880s Ali Hasan's history reveals a consciousness of Muslim community that coincides with an affirmation of British sovereignty, none of which were actually present in the early nineteenth century (in any case, not in the same degree); or the more complicated instance of Mubarak Ali's notion of the Muslim community during the Khilafat movement. However, these instances merely suggest the simultaneous existence of different notions of community. Time merely adds to the number of existing structures in such an approach. It does not enable us to visualise change in important historical formations of consciousness, lacking as it does an understanding of what was the dominant idea of community at a point of time, the way this related to other ideas of community both at that juncture of time as well as what came before and after. A discussion of communalism may have allowed Pandey to enter these ideas of community around an important historical phenomenon, enabling him to see a more living, political connection between consciousness and historical change.

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Sumit Sarkar's essay, 'The Condition and nature of Subaltern Militancy', modifies the basic tenets of subaltern historiography. By doing so, it manages to substantially extend the range of possibilities for its parent school. This is apparent in the organisation of this essay, conceived as it is, on two separate registers, one of critical, empirical enquiry and the other, of fine, speculative analysis. The more significant point is that through this organisation, Sarkar is able to impart an open-endedness to his analysis, which breaks out of the by and large introverted emphasis on the subaltern world by his compatriots, and is able to throw it open to questions that inform its relationship with the work of the leaders. In doing this, Sarkar is able to combine a reiteration of the validity of the subaltern approach with a fresh, questioning look at what makes the subjection of the subalterns possible.

Much of the problems of the subaltern approach has come from the self-imposed limits of its concerns. Ranajit Guha's lucid preface to this volume makes this clear. Guha claims that 'Negativity' is 'the very *raison d'être* as well as the constitutive principle of our project'. Such an inversion of elite historiography, Guha goes on to assure us, would make us look at the 'subaltern as the maker of his own destiny'. The twin objectives, which informs both the methods and 'subjects' of the project, stir a fair amount of confusion, for they flow from rather conflicting assumptions. The idea of negation, on the one hand, demands the existence of its other in order to gain meaning. The idea of dependence is built into this category. On the other hand, conceived as the master of its destiny, the subaltern world is gifted with the self-contained freedom that only a Robinson Crusoe world could claim. It means, as many of the subalterns State, an autonomous world, independent of other modes of existence (which may enter into their presentation as passive backdrops, analogous to the role of nature in Crusoe's island), which these historians, according to their predilections and material, deem 'elite'.

By posing his question as an enquiry into the 'extent of popular initiative', Sarkar is able to use the oppositions between subaltern/elite and domination/subordination as the starting point of his enterprise, without being entrapped by their mutually exclusive implications. The consequence of this is significant. For one, the nature of 'subaltern' assumption changes from its

conception as a new model for history writing based on the subaltern world, which inverts the allegedly 'elite' preoccupations of former Indian historians. In Sarkar's approach, the emphasis on the subalterns becomes a new angle of vision from which it is possible to view the totality of history. The treatment of the subalterns as a vantage point, a necessary political bias rather than a self-enclosed world, gives a fresh flexibility and added critical strength to the 'subaltern' viewpoint. Also, by treating popular initiative as a problematic rather than a rhetorical assumption, Sarkar successfully negotiates the problems posed by the opposition between autonomy/dependence, being able to critically assess the relative importance and paradoxical relations between the two categories. An important outflow of this is the way in which the importance of Gandhi is treated.

In fact, the section on Gandhi is one of the best and most original pieces of writing that the subaltern school has produced, marking as it does, a flexible harnessing of anthropological methods. Organisationally, the third section as a whole both complements the empirical concerns of the second section by treating the question of popular initiative at the level of popular mentalities, and qualifies it by isolating the area where the paradox of popular initiative can be examined. The relationship between the two sections is not, as we shall discuss later, without problems. But what it is able to suggest is the reconcilability of, in fact the necessity of, bringing together empirical, temporal narrative with the generalised effort to discover the structure of popular mentalities. The importance of the alliance between structure and context is felt all the more because Sarkar uses it to examine the role of rumours, especially of Gandhi, in a richer way. By recasting the problem of Gandhi from either an assessment of the implications of his actions (Dutt, Chandra for instance) or its inverse enquiry into the ways in which the subalterns reconstructed Gandhi (Amin and other subalterns), to an analysis of why the subalterns responded to Gandhi, Sarkar is not only able to explain, but is also able to mark the temporal shifts in the structure of popular consciousness towards a more general and positively alternative way of conceiving their rebellion.

The particular section on Gandhi is, as we have stated, truly exciting, not the least because the phenomenon of Gandhi seems to provide the most enigmatic and serious approaches to an understanding of Indian nationalism. More than anything else, the subject of Gandhi focuses on the way nationalism is perceived and experienced. By linking Gandhi with the sanyasi tradition and delving into the semiotic significance of Gandhian motifs such as fast and reconstructive activity, Sarkar does at least three important things. By unravelling the Gandhian code in conjunction with an empirical focus on the limits of Gandhian action (i.e., the so-called Gandhian 'breaks' on political and social protest), Sarkar avoids the terminal explanation offered by the idea of 'false consciousness' without foreclosing other radical and more relevant ways of relating to the same situation. Secondly, in linking Gandhi with pre-existing structures of belief, Sarkar prunes simple-minded teleological formulations that the shift to Gandhian nationalism so easily inspires, while at the same time explicating the radical nature of the shift.

Thirdly—and this relates to a crucial area of 'subaltern' preoccupation—this essay modifies the relation between domination and subordination modelled rather too rigorously by Guha and others, on structuralist principles. Instead of the usual binary opposition model, Sarkar treats this relationship as a paradox. Gandhi's image is subalternised by the mass of his followers, but the very fact

that they need Gandhi's image (or in another context, the rumour of breakdown) suggests a dependence which the dominantly peasant following could not escape. By disturbing the unqualified emphasis on popular initiative, Sarkar cuts out the populist implications of the general 'subaltern' approach, while, at least theoretically, opening up the possibility of seeing the relationship between subaltern and elite as a continuous and interactive one. Equally important, by treating the relations between domination and subordination as one of self-division, Sarkar suggests some beginnings towards an exploration of the less charted, problematic aspect of hegemony which survives on consensus.

The discussion on Gandhi, in fact the whole of the third section, raises some important problems as well, concerning the definition of collective popular mentalities. This is thrown up by a disbalance between the thematic concerns of the essay. The first two sections (especially the first, where the questions are posed) deal with the heterogeneity of collective consciousness. The third section, on the other hand, treats popular mentalities as a homogeneous structure. There is then a certain disjunction between the questions and the explication, flowing from an inability to recognise the validity of heterogeneity within the structure of explanation. The problem seems to lie in Sarkar's operative use of the word 'collective' - he assumes it to imply the narrower idea of homogeneity, which is a different thing from an understanding of it as what is common to popular perceptions.

Arguing that 'outsiders' (who for cultural reasons were Hindu landlords and moneylenders) were the rallying points of communal mobilisation, Sarkar's explanation seeks to subsume the problem of communalism into Thompson's idea of 'moral economy'. But this does not satisfy the complexity that Sarkar observes. For one, especially for an essay that does not exclude the urban presence from 'subaltern' concern, it confines the analysis to rural areas. And within this area too, it does not explain the oscillations between fraternisation and conflict between the Namasudras and Muslims or again, between Muslims and Marwaris. Nor does it throw light upon some remarkable stray incidents, such as the eulogisation of Khudiram by Fazlur Rahman.

What these phenomena do point to, is the existence of two separate though intertwining points of mobilisation, which require the definition and explication of different structures of the community, together with the relationship between them. This is a tall order. But it is necessary, for at least two reasons. There is of course the more immediate political imperative of recognising and separating the different strands within popular consciousness which Gramsci defined as 'common-sense', that is, the heterogeneous character of popular perception. The elements of the different strands would refer not only to separate ideologies but different traditions as well, which may have equivalent or translatable features, but which in their inter-related totality would not be reducible to a single homogeneous structure. Secondly, the necessity for this sort of exercise is so much more important to us, living as we do in a country that is both multi-religious and multi-cultural, co-existing with different kinds of economic relations together with the heritage of colonial order and the narrative of anti-imperialist struggle.

But the really important task would be to understand the relations between the different structures. As Sarkar's evidence suggests, they are far from being distinct and self-enclosed. Nor is it possible to divorce Hindu or Islamic revivalism or even Gandhi from the ideas of political organisation or liberalism that have come to us from the West. An enquiry into relationships would

remove simple-minded distinctions between East and West or Hindu and Islamic without preventing the use of these categories as reference points to explain how different structures relate to them and to each other

There is a further point that Sarkar's application of structuralism raises. This relates to the changes within existing structures or creation of new ones. Rafiuddin Ahmed's study of Bengali Muslims shows how the articulation of different and antagonistic traditions sprang from a culture that was experienced as being interlinked.⁶ A historical structuralist explanation would not only have to recognise features common to both traditions, but also explain the difference between them. More than anything it would have to understand changes in the elements of these structures. For instance, the explanation of Gandhi through the sanyasi tradition would not stop there; it would try to examine how the sanyasi tradition is itself transformed by Gandhi and his context.

It is here that Sarkar's substitution of 'variation' for 'change' does not seem adequate. Variation implies the transcendent strength of the structure, it does not really open an enquiry into the ways in which structures may change, along with infusion of new elements and/or rearrangement of the old. Sarkar's substitution of change may have something to do with the debunking of teleology. But he probably stretches his argument too far. As he himself admits late in his essay, there are 'shifts' in the complex development of popular consciousness. It may be an academic exercise to dispute whether the word 'shifts' should be substituted by 'change', but in any cases the implication of the common idea they suggest is different from 'variations', which implies the temporal persistence of a general structure.

It may be quite possible to deduce such an omni-present structure. But this involves a political point as well. It is hard to see how the formulation of such a general structure could avoid responses of either acceptance or at best, individual rebellion. Any collective effort at social change would need to recognise both the heterogeneity as well as the dynamic character of structures, in order to choose its own continuities and situate its differences. More than anything else, the logic of political intervention requires that the potential for change is visible to itself.

SUBALTERN STUDIES IV: A REVIEW ARTICLE*

Dr. Atlury Murali**

David Arnold's main aim in penning his article, 'Bureaucratic Recruitment and Subordination in Colonial India: The Madras Constabulary, 1859-1947', is to 'correct' the 'elitist bias' in the 'writing of modern Indian history' and balance it by a 'broader analysis of the economic and political bases of the colonial State' (p.2). This correction is done by looking at the means by which the colonial State recruited and disciplined its subordinate personnel, and the relations between subordinate and dominant groups within the bureaucracy and between State subordinates and various social groups outside the State structure (p.2). There are two assumptions which underpin his arguments throughout, i.e., the existence of 'a distinct subaltern identity active even within the institutions of

*Ranjit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985, 383 pp

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State control', and the subordinated constabulary's 'analogies and parallels with *other subaltern groups*' (p 3, emphasis added) Both at the theoretical and analytical plane *subordinated constabulary* within the colonial State and *subaltern groups* outside the colonial State are seen as analogous social groups Can we overlook the implications of his arguments? There are two crucial questions which we would like to start with. Could there be any meaningful analogies and parallels between subordinated workers' of the coercive colonial State apparatus and oppressed subaltern classes, just because the former were the low-paid employees of the State? How far can one draw parallels and analogies between 'agents' of oppressors (colonial State) and oppressed social groups? Before taking up these two questions let us take a look at Arnold's arguments in brief.

In the first section he shows how the particular colonial necessities (?) forced people to go for recruitment to the Madras constabulary from the 'martial races', for in the British perception, as a landed high-caste community they were 'natural defenders of the status quo' (p 13) 'The potential recruit', we are told, 'was thus seen to have a social and political value beyond his personal qualifications' (p 17) Arnold does not construct the historical evolution of the system of surveillance and the law and order machinery of the colonial State in the light of the changing nature of colonial rule Once the political and economic hegemony by military force and new tenurial rights in land was established, the necessity for an elaborate State apparatus—law and order machinery including the judicial system—to structure its politico-ideological hegemony over the civil society was apparent. Of course, the coercive nature of the colonial State was built into its law and order machinery, especially the police, but that was of a different nature from the open military coercion of the early stage The coercion was sometimes invisible to people, for it was covered with an aura of pseudo-legal and rational law and order role of the colonial police system Not surprisingly the nationalist movement's strategy, for instance in 1930-34, was to dispel this aura and show its naked coercive nature to the masses

In the second section he deals with 'recruitment and discipline' of the police subordinates Here Arnold shows how the colonial rulers elaborated and used the existing caste differences to enlist recruits into the low-paid police service, but contradicts himself by arguing that some castes also joined because for them service in the colonial police and army 'might appear not only an appropriate and attractive (with low-pay?) occupation but also one that reinforced and revitalised their old warrior ascendancy' (p 18, emphasis added) 'Most of the leading Telugu castes of peasants and land-holders, including the Kammas, Velamas and Telagas', argues Arnold, 'claim descent from the soldiers and captains of pre-colonial armies, some advanced a present claim to be ranked as Kshatriyas' (p 18), and constituted a large percentage of the Madras constabulary Apart from contradictions, it is a misleading and fictitious statement In Andhra there were several social and caste reform movements with an emphasis on education, both Vedic and English, and equal ritual status with brahmans, but not for a 'warrior ascendancy' or 'Kshatriya' status, that too in the nineteenth century Take for instance, the reform movements among Kamma and Velama castes in the early twentieth century Moreover, how did colonialism confer this 'Kshatriya' status to these castes when they joined the police force? In reality the very logic of the colonial cultural hegemony negates these cultural superior qualities among the colonised groups

From the third section onwards his theoretical and analytical naivety becomes obvious. For Arnold the Madras police constabulary's experience in the early phase resembled that of early industrial workers and later that of the organised industrial proletariat, once the rules and bureaucratic procedures had been drilled into it along with absolute loyalty and obedience to the colonial State. During 1920-22, by voicing their demand for more pay the police are said to have started developing 'trade union consciousness' (p 25). 'By virtue of the nature of their work and opportunities for exploitation and predation . . . *the police subordinates never moved from a position of analogy with other workers to one of solidarity along-side them*' (pp. 25-26, emphasis added). Despite the principal grievance of low pay the Madras constables really betrayed Arnold by not moving from a *position of analogy* with other workers to one of solidarity alongside them. Rather they became more brutal and oppressive by 1930-31, by taking 'rewards and concessions' from the colonial State, i.e., in suppressing the Civil Disobedience Movement (pp. 20-30). Yet Arnold does not get disheartened, for he concludes that the 'demands of the constables were not dissimilar, and their forms of self-expression and organisation, their modes of collective action, bore many similarities with those of industrial workers' (p 31, emphasis added). In other words, for Arnold it is not at all problematic to equate and locate both the industrial working class and the Madras constabulary in the same social, economic and political situation of the oppressed subaltern classes under colonialism. The Madras constabulary might have been the main instrument of the coercive colonial State apparatus and active 'agents' in oppressing the subaltern classes and structuring the consent of the popular masses to the colonial State by coercion. But for Arnold they were also subaltern. Perhaps in Arnold's scheme of subaltern history both 'agents' of oppressors (the State, propertied classes outside the State, etc.) and the oppressed (in this case industrial workers and logically, other subaltern classes) are analogous groups without any contradictions.

He can easily perform the marriage between the cat and the mouse since in his opinion colonial rule failed to distance the constabulary from the people and reduce them to dehumanised agents of colonial control (p 32). This is his main argument in the fourth section. Despite his argument that the police was colonised and co-opted by local elites, especially the rural dominant classes, in support and furtherance of their interests (p 34), he goes on to assert that the 'police subordinates shared in the attitude and activities of the subordinate classes too, through their involvement in crime and riots' (p 36). Arnold makes the extraordinary statement that: 'Constables had other ways than through collective subaltern action to lessen their own poverty. They took bribes from grain traders to ensure their protection or to enable them to charge what they liked for their grain [from whom?], while the government, alert to the danger of constables joining in the pillaging, offered bribes of its own, distributing Rs 6,200 in rewards to the policemen in supporting the riots of 1918' (p.26). Robinhood would perhaps die of shame for 'looting the rich and helping the poor', for a better subaltern way could have been to take bribes (like the Madras subaltern constabulary) from the rich (grain merchants) and the State, and suppress the 'rioting' subaltern classes. He could also, perhaps, learn a lesson from the Madras constabulary who, in late 1940, helped the influential mirasdars in crushing the growing militancy of the Harijan labourers (pp 36-39). After all, the Madras constabulary were the subaltern groups in the coercive colonial State apparatus, so whatever they did is militant subaltern action similar to working

class strikes for higher wages or poor people 'looting' the grain depots of the rich and of the State. Popular masses also expressed their opposition to the police and colonial rule through violent confrontations in struggles and the forceful rescue of arrested nationalists from the police. And in which way the Madras subaltern constabulary 'define their subalternity'? Of course by brutally suppressing the nationalist, peasant and working class struggles (pp 36-41) After all, they are all analogous social groups

However, the reality seems to have hit him hard towards the end. He laments the lack of solidarity between the 'agents' of the oppressors and the oppressed. As he puts it 'A crisis never arose in colonial Madras in which this power for the people was supplanted by a genuine and mutual solidarity with the people' (p 51).

Rashmi Pant*

In his essay, 'Forestry and Social protest in British Kumaon 1859-1947', Ramchandra Guha follows earlier contributors to these volumes in trying to establish cognitive continuities, rather than disjunctions, between forms of struggle and mobilisation that were traditional, and those that were adopted in the course of the anti-colonial movement in this region

The assessment of traditional and modern elements within popular movements is one of the issues on which the Subaltern Studies essayists criticise the existing historiography of popular rebellion in modern India, and differentiate themselves from it

The characterisation of popular action in historical writing up to now, in terms such as 'political'/'pre-political' 'mature'/'primitive' with 'true consciousness'/'false consciousness', stems from an overwhelming concern with the long-term political dynamic in modern India.⁷ This was defined as the anti-colonial and anti-feudal movement by political leaders and historians alike. Although they may define this long-term dynamic differently, where contributors to the *Subaltern Studies* volumes continue to theorise about long-term developments and stages of history, they are also unable to break away from using dichotomous paradigms such as 'mature'/'primitive' and its equivalents in their analyses. However, when contributors have focussed on recreating the subjective consciousness of participants at specific limited moments of agitation they have been able to indicate how transformations of traditional signifiers took place to accommodate modern political constructs such as the colonial State and its legitimising structures. We are able to sense how modern political forces were represented in a popular consciousness which did not break radically from a traditional cultural discourse. Ramachandra Guha's is among the essays that manage to trace, however faintly, this interplay between traditional and modern elements in the constitution of popular political consciousness in modern India.

However, even within the *Subaltern Studies*, Ramchandra Guha recreates the cultural ground in a somewhat different way from many other essayists. A recurrent criticism against some of them, especially against Ranajit Guha, has been that their reconstruction of popular mentalities is too exclusively based on sources relating only to moments of militant outburst. Ramchandra Guha's work is more careful on this account. In this discussion of ecology he has tried to

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show that a non-conflictual cultural relationship between man and nature can explain the generation of political conflict at another point in time

There were widespread agitations against the colonial State in Kumaon and Garhwal in the early twentieth century around two issues. The first was against the levy of statutory labour for carrying loads and supplying provision to touring officials. This levy was called *coolie-bardaish* or *utar*. The second grievance was against the limitation of forest usufruct for the local people, as forests were increasingly reserved by the State for commercial use by a series of laws passed between the 1850s and 1917. Both these agitations came to a head in 1921, leading to the abolition of the unpaid labour levy within weeks, while anger against the forest laws was demonstrated by the wilful burning down of very large areas of forest by the local people.

Till a short while ago the only historical account of these agitations was a book by Badri Dutt Pande,⁸ who was himself an important leader in 1921. He has tended to highlight the mobilisation of that year which was coordinated through a local nationalist organisation, the Kumaon Parishad, which had links with the Congress. More recent research by Shekhar Pathak on the *coolie utar* movement⁹ and by Ramchandra Guha on the forest agitation have shown that popular agitation on these issues preceded the year 1921 and were shaped through organisational structures that were independent of the Kumaon Parishad.

Drawing on Pathak's work as well as his own, Ramachandra Guha has emphasised the overwhelming political importance of the village community in both agitations. According to him, it was the most effective instrument of generating collective agreement on any issue and enforcing discipline, as it was also the repository of popular morality in terms of which the State was seen 'to do wrong'.

Opposition to statutory labour at the village level took several forms, ranging from mass desertions in 1916 and concealing dodgers, to more aggressive actions like strikes or the setting up of a contributory fund to pay the punitive fine levied on strikers. Strikes and strike funds were widely reported in 1920. Moreover it was pressure from its village *padhan* representatives in its annual session at the end of 1920 that forced the Kumaon Parishad to give the call for direct action in 1921. All this does not deny the importance of the Kumaon Parishad in spreading the strikes nor the importance of the nationalist paper *Shakti* edited by Badri Dutt Pande, as a forum for criticising the *utar* system and the forest laws. But the initiative taken by the traditional village communities through all phases of the movement also needs to be taken into account. It was a measure of their strength that village-based resistance was supported by soldiers on leave, school teachers, other government functionaries and was even a strong influence on urban-based nationalists who had small holdings in the village.

The village community was even more deeply implicated in the struggle against closure of the forests. By tradition the forests and pastures surrounding a village were its common property and regulated by the village community. Ramchandra Guha gives us several instances of ways in which the community enforced various traditional practices which helped to conserve the forests. In some areas these included the preservation and planting of sacred groves on hill tops dedicated to local deities, in other areas it could mean permitting only selective cutting at certain specified times of the year, as in Chandkot Pargana of Garhwal. Thus the norms concerning common property and its use were upheld and preserved by the village community. State intervention in the forests

introduced a completely different order of forest exploitation. Rather than preserving all sections of the forest by restricting over exploitation in any part of it, the new commercial felling by the State completely denuded certain coupes of the forest. To allow for regeneration here it was necessary to completely prohibit grazing or wood-cutting in that section for several years. Commercial use also dictated a preference for replanting forest with chir pine instead of a deciduous mix which was far more useful to the small peasant economy.¹⁰ Commercial exploitation of forests by the colonial State therefore brought it into frontal conflict with the village community whose rights of common property, forest usufruct and norms of ecology were violated as a consequence. Guha's research also shows that it did not require the mediation of a nationalist leadership for retaliatory action against the State to be collectively initiated. The wilful burning of forests on a large scale and refusal to cooperate with fire-fighting was widely adopted as a means of hitting out at the Forest Department.

The distance between 'modern' and 'primitive' forms of mass protest is also sought to be bridged by Ram Guha in his discussion of strikes and incendiarism. He argues that the village strike which was such a potent weapon in the anti-*utara* movement was not entirely a modern phenomenon. It drew, according to him, from a traditional form of protest in these areas called *dhandhak*. *Dhandhak* was a mass appeal for redressal to the royal head of State against the excesses of local officials. In a *dhandhak* the orders of a local official could be disobeyed, and he could even be beaten or chased away.

Incendiarism or deliberate firing of the forest was the most widespread form of opposition to the forest laws. These were recognised by the Forest Department as intentional acts of sabotage, especially after the large number of fires that broke out in 1916. In Airadeo for instance a forest fire lasted three days and two nights, with new fires being started time after time directly a counterfiring line was successfully completed (pp 80-81; 88-89). The annual reports of the Forest Department, as well as judicial reports on criminal prosecution testify to the wilful character of incendiarism.

Taken at face value, like the fires of the Swing riots or the Luddite destruction of farm machinery that Hobsbawm has described, popular incendiarism in Kumaon and Garhwal appears to portray 'primitive rebellion', meaning here destructive and blind anger against being dispossessed and economically marginalised. Guha argues however that when analysed within the local cultural context, incendiarism in this region can be read as a positive assertion of common rights and an affirmation of practices necessary to sustain the small peasant economy.

Setting fire to the forest floor was a traditional practice in this region, Guha says, to clear it of pine needles and undergrowth so as to facilitate a good crop of grass for fodder in the next season. Most of the fires in Garhwal are traced by him to an assertion of this ecological practice which was seen as constructive by the peasant, though destructive by the Forest Department. In the Kumaon division however there was also another aspect to incendiarism. Commercial working of chir pine was much more advanced here, and forest fires were set largely to the commercial coupes that had been closed off to the local populace, for felling or resin tapping. On the other hand, Guha has found hardly any recorded instances of wilful fires being set in the mixed deciduous forests which were known to be more useful to the hill peasant. A selection from judicial inquiries in Almora, quoted by Guha, affirm that these were the two major reasons for deliberately setting the forests on fire. Peasant protest in Kumaon, in

the form of incendiarism, thus need not be understood as the unleashing of irrational 'primitive' violence close to criminality, as was argued by Richard Tucker.¹¹ Rather, as Guha says, 'set in their socio-historical context these actions become intelligible and are seen as a frontal challenge to State authority' (p.100)

Since it is the violation of traditional norms by the colonial State that bring the popular classes to the point of political agitation, the reconstruction of a 'moral economy' becomes crucial to Ramchandra Guha's project. There is some weakness in this reconstruction. While he gives some evidence to back the assertion that communal control over forest usufruct was a jealously guarded traditional right, it is not at all clear how morality and injury come into play in the anti-*utar* agitation. It is quite wrongly implied that villages in this region were practically autonomous of the State.

In fact there was a strong tradition in Garhwal and Kumaon of villages giving unpaid hospitality and labour to the State. J.C. Galey has described the several types of labour dues that royalty could command in the Tehri-Garhwal kingdom, which partially survived colonial rule. Apart from military service (*bharti*), *veth-begar* for the king 'included construction and repair of roads, bridges, buildings and temples (*batrawal*), post and mail service (*dak*), transportation and baggage carrying accompanying royal travels (*gaonsar*), supplying servants for travelling officials (*nankari*) and beating during the hunting season (*sikar*).¹² There were also ritual duties called *hela*. The disappearance of dynastic rule moreover did not mean the end of such prerogatives, for according to Galey, they were reproduced by the dominant castes in the village. Sayana and Pradhan require it for their marriage ceremonies, the cult of local divinities present occasions to put it into practice and, as a rule, the funerals and mourning of the powerful are accompanied by the services of *begari*.¹³ What needs to be demonstrated here is why *utar* levied by the colonial State was felt to violate a moral economy, which otherwise accepted the morality of such levies.

The weakness in Ramchandra Guha's essay is, however, more on grounds of research, than on those of method. His moral economy is at least recreated from the cultural specificities of his region, quite in contrast to some other contributors who extrapolate and generalise phenomena over time and space, to the point of doubtful applicability.

Finally Ramchandra Guha also scores over several other essayists in the way he delineates the linkages between the expansion of capital, the development of extractive technologies and the enactment of laws by the colonial State which support this structure. His explicit acknowledgement of a framework of Marxist political economy locates the events with a degree of historical determinateness which is often lost in the formalist cultural classifications constructed by some other contributors with scant respect for the historicity of their data.

Biswamoy Pati*

In 'Adivasi Politics in Midnapur, 1760-1924', Swapna Dasgupta outlines the various changes taking place in adivasi society, the popular forms of protest in the period, and finally, how these extended into the period of the first Congress-

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led mass movement—the Non-Cooperation movement Dasgupta's basic attempt is to create an autonomous enclave of the 'people'—i.e., the adivasis of Midnapur—come what may. Discussing rigorously the process of marginalisation of the adivasis as a result of the colonisation of this tract he reaches a rather simplistic conclusion regarding the nature of the contradiction. For him this was one 'between the sarkar-zamindar-mahajan axis on the one hand and the great mass of the adivasi peoples on the other' (p 104). His references to the *mandali* system (which arose from a combination of the tribal community of the adivasis and the administration of land reclamation which was pre-British), the changes it underwent, the position and role of the village headmen in it, coupled with the emergence of sharecroppers reflect a stratification, in sharp contrast to what the author tries to show.

Further, although one can understand the process of dispossession of the adivasi peasantry, it is difficult to accept how this automatically altered the *mandali* system, replacing each of them with Bengali mahajan *mandals*. Dasgupta cites no evidence to corroborate this and one gets the feeling that he operates with the assumption that the 'people' are a monolith and/or the adivasis are incapable of being exploitative.

Maintaining an intellectual autonomy from the complex changes taking place within Santhal society, Dasgupta erroneously identifies the presence of the *dikus* as distinguishing the colonial encounter from other historical developments (p. 119). Can one look at physical presence as the basis of historical developments? Moreover, were *dikus* attacked because they were outsiders or because they were exploiters?

Proceeding further Dasgupta delineates the features of the 1918-23 phase. He points to the forms of protest, 'the initiative for which came from within the adivasi communities' (p.123). The sequence of the movement outlined by him needs to be carefully grasped. This began as a movement against grain and cloth merchants in the post-war backdrop (1918), which incorporated selective lootings not approved by the nationalists. The primary targets were cloth merchants from northern India, who were also moneylenders who charged high interests. Is it possible that the local Bengali grain merchants were spared due to the extension of Bengali hegemony into the Jungle Mahals? As the author informs us, very soon this movement expressed class solidarity (since in many places Lodhas, Muslims and low-caste Hindus participated) and finally, it spread outside the Jungle Mahals (i.e., south Midnapur) where the adivasi agricultural labourers also resorted to *haat* lootings. And, as the author's evidence suggests, in the 1921-23 period the scope of this movement became much broader as a result of its interaction with the Non-Cooperation movement. What developed was a struggle that incorporated anti-feudalism as well as anti-imperialism, which the author fails to properly emphasise. This was directed against the Indian zamindars as well as the Midnapur Zamindari Company, against which a lot of popular anger existed, given the fact that it combined European ownership with oppressive landlordism. The Congress concentrated on the anti-Midnapur Zamindari Company agitation, and its intervention led to a struggle for higher wages by the agricultural labourers which culminated in strikes.

Owing to his methodological problems the author fails to grasp how, given the specificity of the adivasi movement of Midnapur, it interacted with the broader Non-Cooperation movement. That this process was dialectical and not autonomous, as he expects us to believe, is borne out, among other things, the shaping of the Congress itself in Midnapur, the popular enthusiasm it evoked,

as well as its relevance even after its withdrawal. And it is precisely these features which undermine the author's theoretical construction of autonomy.

Further, what the author fails to comprehend is that the Non-Cooperation movement was the first mass movement launched by the Congress. Consequently the process of its hegemonising the peasant movement was far from being complete. This partly explains the continuation of the movement even after its withdrawal, as well as local Congress support to it in some areas of Midnapur. However, the Congress's withdrawal and the isolation of the *adivasis*, together with the absence of an alternative leadership brought about the tragic collapse of the movement soon after, as Dasgupta's work shows. And these features, perhaps, reflect a lot on the elite/subaltern dialectic—something that eludes the author.

Besides, there are certain things that remain unexplained by the author. For example, the process of 'Hinduisation' is glossed over by him. This, along with the question of Bengali hegemony (we have noted earlier) could perhaps explain a lot of things related to changes in popular perceptions, the way it related to the Congress and its popular appeal. And if seen in this perspective one witnesses a dynamic movement which incorporated popular forms as well as those introduced by the bourgeois-led Congress, in contrast to Dasgupta's constant/no-change perspective.

Dasgupta ends by saying 'Elite politics in Midnapur had thus only a very tenuous connection with the autonomous mobilisation of the subaltern. *Adivasi* insurgency belonged, on the whole, to another domain of politics' (p 135). And, seeing things in the perspective we have outlined, Dasgupta's desperate attempt to abstract the subaltern from the elite is betrayed by his own facts.

Indrani Chatterjee*

The time is 1924-32. The place is Eastern Malda district in north-western Bengal. The people are the Santals of the Barind tract led by Titu Chotka and some Hindu Swarajist men represented by the sanyasi baba Kashishwar Chakravarty, who unite sometimes to throw out the Muslim Shershabadiyas, sometimes the Dikus, or sometimes the representatives of the Raj. It makes up a story that Tanika Sarkar tells in an absorbing fashion in 'Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda, 1924-1932. A Study in Tribal Protest'.

Most Santals of the Barind were share-croppers (*adhiars*) who had been dispossessed of the land. They had originally settled in the beginning of the nineteenth century, by means of deceitful legal devices, refusal to issue rent receipts, illegal enhancements, high interest rates, distraintment of crops, *abwabs* and large-scale use of forced labour—in sum, all that could be symbolised by '*bideshi bichar*'. Some Santals migrated, those left behind petitioned the government to fix the terms of payment. Around 1910 it was six annas per *bigha*. Any attempt at revising this by the landlords seemed to be an attack on the links with tribal ancestors. Resistance became obvious in the twenties when the Bengal Tenancy Act Amendment Bill was discussed and aroused hopes and fears of great changes in agrarian relations. Since this bill sought to fix the status and rights of a share-cropper, whether he was to be a tenant or a farm servant, landlords feared that continuous occupancy of the same plot by a share-

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cropper would make him liable to claim occupancy right and status. Rising prices also encouraged rent enhancements at the same time. The Swarajists in the Bengal Council came down very heavily on the side of the zamindars and eventually lost whatever peasant support they had had since Non-Cooperation. They became increasingly dependent, henceforth, on Hindu communal support. The Swarajists devoted themselves to a Hinduisation programme for tribals and untouchables. It represented a closing of ranks against outsiders and alien religions. During these years, specially in 1926 and 1928, Jitu led a widespread movement committed to making Hindus of Santals and to crop-looting.

However, by the early thirties, the collapse of agricultural prices devalued the importance of land and crops, making the payment of rent and debt extremely difficult. Evictions followed. Once again the Bengal Congress failed to take up class-divisive issues and fell back on Hindu communal forces. In 1932, Jitu with a large band of recently Hinduised Santals, marched up to Pandua city and occupied the Adina mosque, conducted some kind of Hindu worship there, declared the end of the British Raj and set up his own government, calling himself Gandhi. The police opened fire. Pitched battle followed and three Santals, including Jitu died. This ended tribal protest in this region.

As one eminent historian has already pointed out, much of the critique of subaltern studies has itself become stale, stuck as it is in the rut of the 'autonomy-leadership' question. Yet this is precisely the value of Tanika Sarkar's article. It is in the tracing of the various interconnections between Jitu Santal's movement with Hindu communal and Swarajist politics that the significance of her work lies. As she says, the anti-foreign message of the nationalist movement reaffirmed already existent strands of Santal heritage. As the song of 1855 went, 'Saheb rule is troublesome/Shall we go or shall we stay'. The specifically Santal '*desh*' and '*bichar*' that Jitu talked of corresponded also to an old Santal vision of a perfect State of freedom. But the omnipotent-benevolent principle, missing from tribal culture, was provided by the nationalist movement in the image of Gandhi. By 1932, Jitu was calling himself Gandhi, giving *darshan* to his disciples, sitting at the charkha and at Adina mosque, proclaiming Gandhi's raj. This acceptance of Gandhi as an 'over-arching authority' was interesting, given the fact that the Swarajist and Hindu Sabha activists in Malda had little use for Gandhi. This, Sarkar posits, was an 'expression of the independence of tribal politics with regard to Swarajist and Hindu communal forces, and of the limits beyond which manipulation from above failed to work' (p 157).

There are three counts on which this formulation seems unhappy. The first is that Jitu's movement is not independent of Hindu communal forces (and the coincidence of the tribal and Hindu anti-Muslim propaganda is well worked out in the earlier part of Sarkar's own article). The second is that the phrase 'manipulation from above' lumps together, without distinction, the two tiers of leadership—nationalist and provincial. (This is only important if we remember that by the late twenties, the Bengal Provincial Congress was faction-ridden and its relations with the Indian National Congress depended upon which of the factions was dominant.) The third is that Sarkar contradicts herself later with 'The two movements—those of the Malda Santals and of the nationalists—had always overlapped in Jitu's preaching' (p 162). It seems that Sarkar herself switches between reading 'from above' and 'from below' in the course of the article. This kind of reading makes for multiplicity of perspectives, but then one cannot treat 'above' as a dirty word. In short, the matter of leadership again

Sarkar is particularly good when addressing the ever-present myth of subaltern egalitarianism that has been idealised lately. In analysing Jitu's leadership, she points out that though the local hierarchy was sought to be subverted, hierarchy itself was not rejected either personally or systemically. The traditional Santal village organisation had been hierarchical, with the '*majhi*' or headman exercising near-absolute authority. The leaders of the 1855 rebellion, Sido and Kanho, had acted upon this and from this Jitu too derived his claims. He allowed neither dissent nor distribution of political authority at any time. It was the advent of his '*bichar*' and his raj that were promised. Like Sido and Kanho before him, he too tried to replace rent with an annual tribute to himself—one *kula* of paddy. Though he challenged the legitimacy of the prevailing legal system, he wanted to build his own *kutcherry*, thus appropriating an existing symbol of authority. The image of Gandhi as a supreme leader demanding complete fidelity, reinforced Jitu in his position.

The same acceptance of hierarchy is highlighted in the Santals' contempt for the Muslims, Domes and Chamars—an attitude characterising traditional Hindu society and partly at odds with the thrust of the Hindu community. Sarkar brings to her examination of a partial Hinduisation and the larger issue of Santal self-image a great deal of sensitivity and care. And it is in this section of the article that the author points to one of the most glaring lacunae of subaltern studies; the neglect of subaltern attitudes towards other similarly placed groups. In Sarkar's own words, "The 'other' that defines the subaltern's self-consciousness need not only be the elite groups exerting dominance, it may equally be classes and groups that lie even lower in the hierarchy, and the striving to maintain a distance from them may be the most important content of his self-image and self-respect" (pp 152-153).

By her searching analysis of the cultural aspects of Santal consciousness, Sarkar has also distanced herself from that kind of history-writing which subsumes 'religion' within 'political protest', seeing it only as a form rooted 'in autonomous culture', a kind of history-writing best associated with the editor of the present volume.

A small note on the structure of the article, one hopes, would not come amiss, since it appears disjointed after a preliminary reading. In delineating each of the strands that make up for the entire pattern Sarkar's method retains the ambiguities and complexities of the subject but may not enthuse readers with a history of unilinear leadings.

Pragathi Mahapatra*

The history of the subaltern classes have captured the historian's imagination in its more dramatic moments. While peasant revolts and tribal movements continue to receive increasing attention, the more 'mundane' aspects of subaltern history and culture remain largely unexplored. David Hardiman's essay, 'From Custom to Crime: The Politics of Drinking in Colonial South Gujarat', is therefore more than welcome for it focuses attention on the history of 'drink' and 'drinking' in colonial South Gujarat.

A history of drink, for Hardiman, 'provides a means towards a better understanding of the relationship between peasants and dominating classes in colonial and post-colonial India' (p 167). It is also a study of the effects of

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colonial and nationalist policies on the drinking practices of the peasants. There were a number of elite-inspired as well as popular temperance movements which form another concern of the essay.

Daru (distilled country liquor) and toddy occupied a central place in the lives of the peasants of South Gujarat. Contrary to middle-class beliefs, they drank moderately on the whole, despite occasional festive gusto. We are told that drink, especially the home-brewed toddy, had positive associations with all spheres of their lives. Apart from being the source of vital nourishment, it sealed negotiations, legitimized family ceremonies and propitiated the gods.

British policy towards alcohol was conditioned by a variety of factors: rising evangelicism, a desire for increased revenue as well as the application of some of the ideals of the British temperance movement to the Indian situation. The colonial officials believed they were discouraging people to drink and encouraging industrious habits by increasing the price of liquor. To quote Hardiman, '... the moral ideals of the colonial administrators turned out, in best Victorian fashion, to be in complete accord with their financial needs' (p. 188). The Bombay Abkari Act of 1878 and subsequent policies were to have a devastating effect on the lives of the peasants of South Gujarat. While abkari revenue rose considerably, the taxing of the toddy-bearing trees and the centralisation of liquor distillation hit the peasants badly. The quantity of *daru* as well as toddy deteriorated under the new system, while indebtedness and pauperisation were on the rise. While the good old home brew (toddy) was too expensive to tap, the high price of liquor only strengthened the hold of the Parsi liquor dealer-cum-landlord over the peasants.

Complaints, both verbal and written, failed to produce any lasting results. Hardiman recounts a touching story of a group of tribals who collected money, went all the way to Bombay and tried to submit a petition to the Government through some attorneys. The failure of these modern channels only underline the helplessness of the peasants. Illicit distillation as well as smuggling were some of the ways to beat the system. A radical reaction was to give up drinking altogether. The content of temperance, however, was different here than in the case of middle-class inspired movements. So long as it remained an isolated act adopted by a limited number of individuals within the community, it was an expression of renunciation of the membership of the community—a means of advancing social status by adopting the ethical values of ritually pure and respectable castes. But when it was adopted by the whole community, it was a powerful badge of new-found solidarity in the struggle against the oppression of Parsi liquor-dealer landlords. The 'Devī movement' (1922-24) marked the culmination of a series of such temperance movements.

Temperance provided a meeting ground between the Gandhian Congress and adivasi politics. The emphasis on the 'purity' aspect of temperance tied up with the 'atmashuddhi' of the Gandhians. These popular movements also lent real strength to the Congress demand for 'prohibition'. The dominant nationalist opinion on temperance reflected the typical high caste contempt for 'drink' and all those who drank. Drinking was declared to be alien to Indian culture and the British were blamed for encouraging drinking for pecuniary purposes. It was a good stick to beat the British with. The growing nationalist influence was successful in enforcing total prohibition in Gujarat, which is in force till today. Prohibition was highly successful in stopping the masses from drinking. Consequently, a large majority of peasants have become so-called 'habitual criminals', in that they regularly make and drink illicit liquor.

Hardiman also seems to have a narrow and insular view of 'drinking' as an aspect of popular culture. We are told about the general importance of 'drink' and 'drinking' in the lives of the people, that it sanctioned social and ritual occasion, provided relief from drudgery, was of substantial nutritional value, etc. There is, however, no attempt to see 'drinking' in the specific cultural context of the area. He tells us practically nothing about other aspects of popular culture, the place of drink in religious worship and popular perception about and attitudes towards drinking.

The insular view of drinking also affects his treatment of changing attitudes about drinking. The popular temperance movements are seen either in terms of assimilation of elite values or as protest against essentially economic grievances. The particular form which these movements take is seen to be of no significance to him. Again, the fact that peasants continued to drink despite prohibition and their own temperance movements is taken as evidence of their rejection of elite values. In themselves, neither 'drinking' nor 'temperance' can per se be characterised as either 'elite' or 'subaltern' devoid of a particular context. Hardiman's own research shows how "temperance" in the context of the Devi movement was an effective political weapon symbolising *adivasi* assertion.

Hardiman tells us that 'On the whole, the drinking customs of the peasants of South Gujarat have proved remarkably resilient under attack'. However, he does not produce any evidence for this assertion. All his evidence points to the fact that despite prohibition, the majority of peasants continue to drink. No doubt, the fact of 'survival' of 'drinking' is largely due to the earlier social sanction enjoyed by it. Yet, there is every reason to doubt whether this 'drinking' practice retains the same associations it had in the 'practice' traditional context. Hardiman's own evidence shows that the older localised controls over the manufacture of 'drink' were permanently destroyed. The peasants do not even drink the same stuff. Is it possible that the social context of 'drinking' practices remained unaffected by those changes? Again, we have no clue as to how the State-enforced notions of criminality affected peasant perceptions about drinking. At any rate, it seems hardly likely that the continuance of drinking retains the same social functions or can be taken as an assertion of older community values.

Colonial excise policy, ultimately resulted in replacing a healthy customary drink, whose manufacture was controlled at local levels, by a commercialised, unhealthy and poorer drink manufactured under privatised monopolistic controls. To a certain extent, the story parallels the developments which occurred in the sphere of land rights. In that sphere also a broad transition occurred over a period of time from 'custom to contract'. The crucial difference, however, becomes apparent, after the introduction of prohibition by the Congress Government. Prohibition, despite its partial popular origins ultimately criminalised a customary social act, thereby dramatically transforming the people's relationship with the State. The significance and seriousness of this process is however, crucially absent in Hardiman's essay. His discussion of the deeper implications of the nationalist policy of prohibition is also unsatisfactory.

Srimanjari*

Gautam Bhadra's 'Four Rebels of Eighteen Fifty Seven' seeks to restore to history the 'rebeliousness' of four activists of the 1957 uprising. These individuals strove hard to be a part of the logic of rebellion. He desists from the

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beaten track of tracing the 'causes' of the uprising and thus refuses to confer adjectives by way of defining it. Gautam Bhadra has undertaken a more difficult task of understanding 'subaltern' consciousness through certain personalities rather than idealise or distort reality by giving it a larger historical character.

The characters which he seeks to analyse are Shah Mal, a 'small zamindar' of Bijraul, Devī Singh of Tappa Raya, Mathura, Gogoon, the Kol leader, and Maulvī Ahmadullah, Shah of Awadh. Though not bound by generalities the jarring note which runs throughout the analysis is the effort made to expose the 'ordinariness' of these four contemporaries. It is obvious that their 'ordinariness' is considered the only claim to their subaltern consciousness. But we feel tempted to question this claim.

At the outset he refers to them as 'ordinary' because these characters have not been given due recognition in the history writing of the 1857 Mutiny. But as the narrative unfolds we realise that Gautam Bhadra has adopted two stereotyped meanings of the term. 'Ordinary' to him implies an absence of lineage. It is also an inference from the mean treatment which the characters have received in the official chronicles. Gautam Bhadra quotes William's *Report* (of 7 August 1857) which tells us that Shah Mal had 'from a nothing become the rebel of some importance' (p. 235). Whereas the chronicles may have meant that Shah Mal had not posed a threat prior to 1857, Gautam Bhadra interprets the statement to mean the rise to significance of an ordinary mortal because of his participation in the struggle of 1857.

Shah Mal was a 'small zamindar' in a region which bore the highest rent rates in the district.¹⁴ Moreover his perception of power was not ordinary. Gautam Bhadra admits that Shah Mal had developed a 'supra-beal perception of power' and had forged alliances beyond the confines of his area. He was popular among the Gujar, Tyagi and Muslim inhabitants of the neighbourhood who harboured him and assisted him in putting a bold front against Dunlop's forces.

Similarly, there would be nothing farther from the truth than the description of Maulvī Ahmadullah Shah as an ordinary rebel leader because he knew 'only little Arabic and Persian' (p. 275). He was judged by the people not for his intellectual powers but for his ability to convince and communicate with them. So sure was he of his invincibility that he had threatened Begum Nusrat Nahal and Birjis Qadr, the new king of Awadh, to acknowledge him as king and become his disciples.¹⁵

Devī Singh is considered ordinary because in Thornhill's account he is referred to as an 'ordinary-looking man' whose seat of authority was an 'ordinary village' (p. 255). The fact that the Jats (the community to which Devī Singh belonged) of this region were dominant cultivators with proprietary rights over the land does not alter Bhadra's assessment of his ordinariness. But it should be borne in mind that these rebels were not ordinary in relation to and in the eyes of their followers. Moreover, by merely referring to them as leaders of groups, however small or insignificant, we lift them above the 'crowd'.

When most of the accounts of the revolt stop short of its causes and consequences, Gautam Bhadra endeavours to know the moods and feelings which events generated. He describes with penchant the 'popular excitement' which followed the battle at Chinhāt in which the 22nd Native Infantry led by Maulvī Ahmadullah Shah defeated Sir Henry Lawrence's forces. While he refers to the euphoric and subversive feelings which a brief taste of power unleashed, he fails to mention the challenge posed by the sepoys of the rebel army to the 'natural' flow of authority into the hands of the indigenous rulers when they demanded

'double pay' 'from the date of the sepoys leaving the English service' before relinquishing control to Begum Nusrat Mahal¹⁶ The fact should have been included if only to show that a brief but momentous victory against the English had enabled the sepoy—one among the subaltern classes to gain in confidence and dictate terms to their Indian masters

Gautam Bhadra considers rebellion to be rooted in peasant consciousness. It thus remains a part of collective memory which is invoked to subvert existing structure of power-relationships Shah Mal had called upon the territorial solidarity and kinship traditions of the Chowrasee Des—a group of 85 villages comprising of principal Jat clans—to take up cudgels against the pale-faced invaders (p 242) What about 'trends' in rebel consciousness which get activated due to specific causes? The Gujar and Tyagi support to Shah Mal was not incidental. The severity of the revenue assessments was a compelling factor in drawing them close to Shah Mal If on one the hand it is necessary to wean ourselves away from an 'economic' or causal explanation of revolt, on the other the importance of specific developments and causes in moulding popular perception also need to be considered The narrative at certain stages attempts to dissociate rebellion from changes in the economic structure Is it a case of familiarity breeding contempt in academic pursuits?

At a time when the colonial structure was losing ground, a search was on for an alternative system of government All the rebel leaders taken up in this narrative were groping for a power structure to replace the raj Gautam Bhadra observes that their perception of power and authority was limited to demands made for the restoration of the old glory of the Mughal court and the rule of the local 'rajahs'. Thus Devi Singh's attempt to remodel the rebel government on the 'very structure of authority aimed at destroying' represents in Bhadra's view 'the historic limitations of the insurgent consciousness of this time The rebel had not yet found his way to his own world' (p 253-54) Instead of dismissing this attempt, it could be interpreted to mean that all would not be chaos and disorder once the insurgents had taken over.

At times Gautam Bhadra's choice of phrases to describe rebel mentality betrays a certain ambiguity When Thornhill is quoted to prove the limitations of Devi Singh's perception of colonial authority, for instance, 'having driven out the police he thought he had overthrown our government, Gautam Bhadra considers it a 'want of maturity perhaps historically inevitable' (p 255) Are we to think that like many others Gautam Bhadra also considers the 'want of maturity' a trait peculiar to peasant mentality? Similarly Gonoo's admission that he was a mere follower of the Rajah and not a leader is considered the authentic limitations of his political consciousness as a typical Kol rebel of his time (p 263) But are we justified in our assessment of rebel consciousness when we know that the rebel leaders never aimed at supplementing the indigenous structure of hierarchy? Is any attempt to acquire legitimacy to be branded as a limitation of political consciousness when it was still evolving?

Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah's role is illustrated within the symbolic context of religion and rebellion He had used images and metaphors—'spiritual immorality of the Raj', 'accursed English', 'impure Victoria', 'polluted bitch' (p 271)—to rouse what Gautam Bhadra refers to as the 'religio-political type of popular consciousness' (p 267). The historical destiny of the Maulvi's movement was not social-subversion but restoration of 'order' by a 'Mahomedan chief' according to Quranic precepts and Shariat laws Gautam Bhadra regrets that the alternative authority was not egalitarian But his social status and profession would not

have allowed him to propagate anything apart from this. It ought to be remembered that ultimately the Maulvi was not a revolutionary but a religious leader with political ambitions. Forgetting this simple fact, Bhadra decries his use of religion for political pursuits.

All the rebels of Gautam Bhadra's article function in an atmosphere charged with hopes of victory. Had he included any one of the rebel regiments in his narrative, it would have been possible to show that fear of retribution was equally potent in engendering violence.

Saurabh Dube*

Bernard Cohn's 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command' focuses on the appropriation and control of Indian languages and knowledge: the project was an integral component of colonial power and domination. Cohn rehearses the history of British encounter with Indian languages by presenting a series of examples, the efforts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to learn Indian languages, particularly Persian, which were blocked by cultural and practical obstacles, the exercise between 1770 and 1785 to 'master' 'classical' and 'vulgar' languages by ordering and codifying them through a simultaneous production of grammars, dictionaries, treatises, class books and translations and of notions of the relationship between these languages, and, finally, the efforts to build institutions—the Calcutta Madrasa, the Sanskrit College at Banaras and the college at Fort William—to 'preserve' Indian knowledge. The difficulty with Cohn's essay lies in his treatment of the central theme: the exercise of power through the British 'command' over Indian languages and knowledge.

Cohn's statement of the problem is narrow and limited. 'The knowledge which this small group of British officials sought to control was to be the instrument through which they were to issue commands and collect ever-increasing amounts of information'¹⁷ in official sources 'we can trace the changes in the forms of knowledge which the conquerors defined as useful for their own end' (p. 276). Cohn tends to reduce the exercise of power through the British control of Indian languages to the needs and necessities of the colonial enterprise. He does not, as a result, adequately address issues which are central to the theme. Cohn acknowledges that he is dealing with a process which involved an interface: the British drew upon the categories of their cultural order to act upon Indian categories and forms of knowledge, Indian categories and forms of knowledge were not inert and passively yielding. At the same time, Cohn does not go far enough in his attempts to tackle these questions through an engagement with the evidence he presents. We do not find out the manner in which 'European grammatical' and cultural categories seized upon Indian languages and knowledge to reorder and transform them. Equally, Cohn does not explore the creative cultural role played by dominated but ever resurgent 'Indian forms of knowledge' in shaping a project which sought to objectify and convert them into an instrument of colonial rule. What is missed out is the way power was implicated in and built into the categories through which the British appropriated Indian knowledge and languages¹⁸ and the process of the cultural construction of this enterprise.¹⁹ Cohn's assertion that the British control of Indian languages and knowledge 'began the establishment of discursive formation, defined an epistemological space, created a discourse (orientalism),

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and had the effect of converting Indian forms of knowledge into European objects' (p 283) is not worked out in a dialogue with his evidence

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- 4 Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, Delhi, 1986
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- 6 Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906 A Quest for Identity*, Delhi, 1981
- 7 For some representative writing within this framework, see Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1979, D N Dhanagare, 'Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics The Moplah Rebellion in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', in *Past and Present*, No 74, February 1977, pp 112-114, and Majid Siddiqui, *Agrarian Unrest in Northern India The United Provinces 1918-1922*, New Delhi, 1978
- 8 Badri Dutt Pande, *Kumaon Ka Itihas*, Almora, 1937
- 9 Shekhar Pathak, 'Uttarkhand Mein Coolie Begar Pratha 1815-1949', unpublished Ph D thesis, Dept of History, Kumaon Univ, 1980, and Shekhar Pathak, 'Kumaon Mein Begar Anmulan Andolan', paper presented at a seminar on Peasant Movements in Uttar Pradesh at Jawaharlal Nehru University, October 19-20, 1982
- 10 Broad-leaved deciduous trees, especially the Himalayan oak, provided fodder and leaf manure, while their roots were correctly believed to conserve water, thereby conserving springs and preventing floods
- 11 Cited by Ramchandra Guha, 'Forestry and Social Protest in British Kumaon 1893-1921', in Ranajit Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies IV*, Delhi, 1985, fn 141, p 93
- 12 J C Galey, 'Creditors, Kings and Death Determinations and Implications of Bondage in Tehri-Garhwal (Indian Himalayas)', in C Malamond (ed), *Debts and Debtors*, New Delhi, 1983
- 13 Ibid
- 14 Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed*, edited by C A Bayly, London, 1986, p 165
- 15 Rudranshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in revolt 1857-1858 A Study of Popular Resistance*, Delhi, 1984, p 141
- 16 Ibid, p 136
- 17 Although Cohn acknowledges an interface, in his argument Indian knowledge and the specialist who controlled it assume an inert and passive character
- 18 This seems to be a serious lapse Cohn states that 'I have chosen to utilise a mode of exposition which is obviously influenced by Michael Foucault' My effort will be to try to locate the kinds of questions his work directs towards ' (p 284) The manner in which power is implicated and is exercised through the categories and organising principles of a discourse is a central concern of Foucault
- 19 This is not to suggest that Cohn completely ignores these questions Our point is that he does not tackle these questions in a consistent and systematic fashion to constitute an argument

REVIEW ARTICLE

The 'Elitism' of Nationalist Discourse

PARTHA CHATTERJEE, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World A Derivative Discourse*, Oxford University Press, 1986, 180 pp, Rs 110

A serious student of history is fascinated by the past, reasonably so, for it promises to answer a number of questions embedded in the present. Nationalism especially interests one today, when the limitations of national social transformation and national consensus are becoming increasingly apparent. The primary question is, how does one look at the phenomenon of nationalism in a historical perspective? The demands of professional competence impel one to be acutely sensitive to the specificities of the phenomenon. This would mean that due heed be paid to both the objective constraints (including not only the constraints at the material level but also the hegemonic ideology, for example, Orientalism, paternalism, the civilising mission, i.e., Kipling's 'white man's burden', etc.) and to the subjective endeavour to transcend them (the distinction maintained is a purely analytical one as both impinge on each other).

Let us see how Chatterjee faces the above question. For the sake of clarity, we would first attempt a systematic arrangement of the chief formulations of the book and then we would critically analyse them.

1. Nationalist thought in India (consciously studied by the author with reference to three persons: Bankim, Gandhi and Nehru) was primarily an elitist discourse and seems riven with an inherent and historically irresolvable contradiction. This stemmed from the fact that the 'educated elite' or the nationalist intelligentsia could not reconcile what they perceived as 'national' (elements of culture) with the 'modern', which to them seemed definable only in terms of the post-Enlightenment rationalism of European culture.

2. The element of self-contradiction in the nationalist discourse is patent in the problematic and the thematic that it historically adopts:

... the problematic in nationalist thought is exactly the reverse of that of Orientalism. That is to say, the object in nationalist thought is still the Oriental, who retains the essentialist character depicted in Orientalist discourse. Only he is not passive, non-participating. He is seen to possess a 'subjectivity' which he can himself 'make' (p. 38).

The thematic (the 'justificatory' structures of an ideology, that is, the 'epistemological principles' used to demonstrate the existence of the 'claims' made as historical possibilities) in nationalist thought accepts and adopts the same 'objectifying' procedures of knowledge constructed in the post-Enlightenment age of Western Science (p. 38).

This, in turn

gives' specific shape to its politics . Pitting itself against the reality of colonial rule. nationalism seeks to assert the feasibility of entirely new political possibilities These are its political claims which colonialist discourse haughtily denies Only a vulgar reductionist can insist that these new possibilities simply emerge out of the supposedly objective working of the world-historical process, that they do not need to be thought out, formulated, propagated and defended in the battlefield of politics The polemical content of nationalist ideology is its politics (p 40)

3. The nationalist discourse aspiring for 'intellectual moral leadership in a colonial situation was also shaped by the objective constraints inherent in the colonial situation, e.g , the political position of older governing classes, a backward agrarian economy, the weakness of the indigenous bourgeoisie, etc

4 The nationalist discourse as it evolved in this context acquired a crooked form (Chatterjee cites the analogy from Brecht: 'Crooked line', p vii) Its historical manifestations may be seen as follows:

(i) The inherent conflict between the 'modern' and the 'national' resulted in the bourgeois opposition to imperialism acquiring a dubious character

The half-heartedness and ambiguity was part of the very process of bourgeois development in a colonial country 'the dialectics of loyalty and opposition' did not permit 'a clear division among the native bourgeoisie or the entire middle class into two exclusive categories of collaborators and opponents of imperialism ' In India bourgeois opposition to imperialism was always ambiguous. (p 25)

(ii) Nationalist thought at its 'moment of departure' (discussed with reference to Bankim) seems eloquent with the crucial point of tension, i.e , the conflict between the 'modern' and the 'national' In a situation where both the reformists (identifiable with moderate nationalists) and the revivalists (those talking of a more uncompromising position on the question of colonial rule) 'were equally prisoners of the rationalism, historicism and scientism of the nationalist thematic' (p 80), the latter understandably tried to lay an 'ideological emphasis on what was distinctly 'national', i.e , culturally distinct from the Western and modern' (p 81)

(iii) The nationalist discourse, being essentially elitist, was faced with the 'insurmountable difficulty of reconciling the modes of thought characteristic of a peasant consciousness with the rationalist forms of an 'enlightened' nationalist politics 'Either peasant consciousness would have to be transformed, or else it would have to be appropriated' (p 81) The first 'could hardly seem a viable political possibility' The other possibility then was an appropriation of peasant support for the historic cause of creating a nation-State in which the peasant masses would be represented, but of which they would not be a constituent part In other words, a 'passive' revolution' (p 81).

(iv) The intervention of Gandhism at this particular stage in the development of nationalist discourse was of immense historical importance Gandhism, as a 'critique of civil society' (so Chatterjee convincingly argues), adopted a standpoint that lay entirely outside the thematic of post-Enlightenment thought, and hence of nationalist thought as well Gandhism in its formulation of 'the legitimacy of resistance to an oppressive State apparatus' could

'encapsulate perfectly the specific political demands as well as the modalities of thought of a peasant communal consciousness' (p. 100)

Clearly, there are many ambiguities in Gandhism. And a proper understanding of its history must go into a detailed examination of how these ambiguities created the possibility for those two great movements that form part of the story of the formation of the new Indian State on the one hand, the transformation in each region and among each strata of society, the demands of the people into the 'message of the Mahatma', and on the other, the appropriation of this movement into the structural forms of a bourgeois organisational and later constitutional order (pp. 101-102)

(v) In Nehru the author finds an entirely novel ideological reconstruction of the elements of nationalist thought. This can be seen as the 'final, fully mature stage of the development of nationalism in India—its moment of arrival'

It was a reconstruction whose specific form was to situate nationalism within the domain of a State ideology. Given the historical constraints imposed on the Indian bourgeoisie within the colonial social formation, its intellectual-moral leadership could never be firmly established in the domain of the civil society. Of historical necessity, its revolution had to be passive, the specific ideological form of the passive revolution in India was an *etatisme*, explicitly recognising a central, autonomous and directing role of the State and legitimising it by a specifically nationalist marriage between the ideas of progress and social justice (p. 132)

(vi) So Chatterjee reaches the conclusion that

The critique of nationalist discourse must find for itself the ideological means to connect the popular strength of those struggles (of the people-nation) with the consciousness of a new universality, to subvert the ideological sway of a State, which falsely claims to speak on behalf of the nation and to challenge the presumed sovereignty of a science which puts itself at the service of capital, to replace, in other words, the old problematic and thematic with new ones. (p. 170)

Before starting on a polemic with the author, one must congratulate him for having made a highly ambitious attempt to write a well-argued intellectual history of modern India. The compass of analysis shows his absolute grasp of Western social and political philosophy. Chapter I compresses a whole range of interpretations of nationalism, while it also manages to include a brilliant summary of the recent contributions to the intellectual history of nineteenth-century India. But one regrets the fact that this has not been properly integrated in the rest of the book. Chapter II attempts to familiarise the reader with the specifically chosen use of some of the philosophical concepts, which set the frame for the arguments to follow in the chapters on Bankim, Gandhi and Nehru. The titles given to these chapters are rather catchy but the quotation from Brecht in the beginning of the book, unintentionally bewares the reader of their polemical content. The book can boast of uniqueness as nothing of this kind exists.

Ambitious as the attempt is, it has its limitations. The central argument of the book is flawed by a basic error in the use of categories of analysis. The author assumes that the elite/subaltern distinction should be clear and acceptable to everyone, while it has been seriously questioned by many historians.¹ This slack in the rigour of analysis also reflects in this assumption that all shades of nationalist thinking associated with a *Weltanschauung* conceivable in terms of the rationalist heritage of the Enlightenment, should necessarily be considered elitist. Further, Chatterjee's claim would have been weighty had he gone on to formulate an alternative to the nationalist discourse with a new problematic and thematic from the 'popular' angle. In that case, one would have been able to raise more pertinent questions. This makes the end of the book rather disappointing. All that he does is to cite Marx's letter to Vera Zasulich (p. 170) which suggests that toward the end of his life Marx was seriously thinking about the possibility of a society bypassing capitalism. But as Walicki reminds us, this goes against all the best-known works of Marx which contain 'formulations suggesting that capitalism is an inevitable natural stage through which every country must pass'.² In fairness to Chatterjee, one would concede that his proposition has the polemical worth of stimulating a review of developmental choices made in the past four decades.

Another basic objection to Chatterjee's treatment of the subject matter could be made regarding the choice of three persons (undoubtedly important) to trace the development of the nationalist discourse. Bankim, for example, appears as the first exponent of nationalism in this book while in reality, in many respects he shows continuity in the nineteenth-century intellectual tradition. K. N. Panikkar suggests that the concept of 'dual alienation' given by Amílcar Cabral would be useful in understanding the process, whereby both the reformist and 'revivalist' strands contributed to the growth of an anti-colonial consciousness in nineteenth-century India.³ While it is true that persons like Rammohan, Vidyasagar and others did not represent social forces desiring transformation, i.e., they were not 'organic intellectuals' in the Gramscian sense of the term, it will be equally partial to say that for them 'reason dwindled to a merely individual means of self-gratification without social responsibility' (p. 25).⁴

The dichotomy that Chatterjee maintains between 'liberal constitutionalist' and 'nationalist' thinking also precludes him from appreciating the great advance made by the nineteenth-century intellectuals—from Rammohan to the 'moderate nationalists'—in exposing the exploitative basis of colonialism. The 'compradorism' of the 'moderates' seems misplaced when one realises that they were not for colonial rule as it functioned but for an idealised image of liberal government (Naoroji's phrase 'Un-British rule').

The attempt to locate the 'nationalist thought' within a problematic has its utility in emphasising the enormous role that so-called 'superstructural' forms play in the making of consciousness. But the concept of thematic is a little troubled. One finds it difficult to accept that nationalist politics was shaped by continuous innovative thinking. Though critical thinking was indeed consequential, from this angle neither Bankim nor Gandhi or even Nehru deserve the importance accorded to them. The economic critique of colonialism had been evolved by the end of the nineteenth century, and all the forms of popular resistance noticed in the Gandhian period of mass nationalism had been in existence from earlier times (e.g., Gopal Hari Deshmukh was the first to give the idea of *swadeshi*). So Chatterjee's contention does not square with facts.

Perhaps the most important part of the book is an attempt to assess the historical role of Gandhian thought in effecting the transition to mass nationalism. This needs to be explored extensively. But as Chatterjee talks of the 'two great moments', he assumes the co-existence of two distinct domains of politics—one organisational-constitutional, and the other autonomous-popular—and that they are comparable. Here again the question of categories of analysis creates some difficulty. Though it is true that there existed a relatively unorganised sphere of popular politics which was not concerned with the question of devolution of power, that in essence was different from nationalist politics and would not seem comparable. Nonetheless, Chatterjee's main thrust as one understands it, is to show how Gandhism, with the ambiguities, could assimilate the peasant consciousness. This is an interesting aspect. For example, it would be important to explore how the 'demands of the people' coloured their perception of the ambiguous Gandhian utopia of Ramrajya.

The chapter on Nehru (pp 131-165) brings out the pitfalls in his understanding of social and developmental issues of importance. His mechanistic Marxism, exaggerated optimism about the autonomy of a national State and belief in a universal path of progress actually explain his failures. Approaching the developmental issues with a convenient explanation of 'false consciousness', he could outright dismiss the question of a significant co-existence of decentralised small-scale industry with the 'commanding heights' of the economy.

While accepting the limitations of the national movement and post-colonial social transformation, one wonders whether the concept of 'passive revolution' is of any aid in understanding them better. In fact, it is questionable on several grounds. First of all, Gramsci's concern with historicism itself reminds us to analyse a situation in its particularity. His stray remarks on India betray his complete unfamiliarity with the specificities of Indian situation. In analysing any phenomenon pertaining to Indian society, one just cannot ignore the role of the caste system and other such unique features. Besides, colonial nationalism is hardly comparable to nationalism in Europe. While the European nation-States were the main building blocks of world capitalism, during a lengthy period of its development and with it of bourgeois society in the 'developed' world (as Marx recognised when he described that society in the *Communist Manifesto* as both a global unity and 'an interdependence of nations'), nationalism in the colonial world was primarily linked to anti-imperialism. Further, many of the reasons given earlier to refute some of the fundamental postulates of the author would hold here too.

Nevertheless, Chatterjee's book is a welcome attempt to write a history of social thought in modern India, with a polemical perspective. He exhibits a refined analytical sense in making intelligent interconnections. He also shows a sophisticated approach to history as he does not work with the convenient infrastructure/superstructure model. But even as he is bestowed with all this, he has only been able to reveal the limitations in Nehru's understanding of communalism; the book does not indicate the solutions to problems plaguing the 'national question' in India. The book is useful in bringing out the reasons for the failure of two of the most outstanding leaders of recent past. They in themselves serve as lessons to posterity.

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Congress, Peasants and the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bihar (1930-1932)

The radicalisation of the nationalist movement in India after the First World War began to draw the rural masses. The peasants were brought into the national movement with a view to strengthening it and making it more broad-based. However, owing to the limitations imposed on the movement by the narrow class interests of its leadership the movement launched by the peasants did not outgrow its nationalist framework for a long time. Since the overriding concern of the national movement was political, the basic social and economic issues which agitated the minds of the peasantry were pushed to the background. The leadership of the Congress tried to reconcile the irreconcilable interests in its attempt to keep intact the national character of the movement.

While not taking up the causes of the peasantry in right earnestness the Congress did try to utilise the peasant 'canon-fodder', for the furtherance of the nationalist cause. The present paper tries to show how the Bihar Congress leaders made capital out of the grievances of the peasants for the furtherance of the nationalist cause without doing anything concrete for them during the first two years of the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1932). Our choice of the region seems proper as Bihar occupied a high place in this phase of the national struggle and it was also a storm-centre where the Kisan Sabha movement had its greatest strength from 1933 to 1947.

Civil Disobedience and Peasants' Actions

In fact the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bihar was 'practically in the hands of the village people'.¹ They took it up in right earnest and worked with great enthusiasm and success. Without caring for results they gladly worked for the programme with ample resourcefulness.² The Congress had realised that 'the so-called educated and town people are fond of demonstrations. Only a few lawyers here and there and a few students have joined the movement and are working for it'.³

In the beginning there was no elemental outburst and the government thought that things were better than during non-cooperation. But as soon as emphasis shifted from an effective salt campaign to non-payment of choukidari tax, the movement, according to officials, took a menacing turn. The administration virtually collapsed in pockets like the Barhi (Barahiya) region of the district of Munger.⁴ Bihpur Ashram's sustained defiance caused alarm in government circles since they saw the apparition of Midnapur in it.⁵ In some

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cases the then landlords of Bihar even bowed to the pressures exerted by their tenants. Raja Raghunandan Prasad resigned his membership of the Legislative Assembly, 'ostensibly as a protest against the Simon Commission Report, but to no small extent because of the continuous pressure of his tenants whose support of the Congress movement was whole-hearted'.⁶ The peasants of one village of Kisan Ganj forced the SDO of that subdivision to conduct an enquiry into the cases of illegal realisation by their zamindar, Hazi Ahmad Hussain. Gandhian restraints on non-violence were breaking down in Bihar towards the end of 1930 and early 1931 with a series of attacks on police parties. The government was greatly concerned over the attack on the police by a peasants' 'mob' of two thousand in Saran District.⁷ At Darauli in the same district an attack was made on the mounted military police who were visiting villages to assist the collection of chaukidari tax.⁸ In Champaran an attack was made on the police and the Subdivisional Officer of Bettiah, who were supervising the collection of chaukidari tax and arrested prisoners were rescued.⁹ The following day reinforcements were sent but again a small body of district lathi police was attacked. Even when the main body of Gurkha Military Police arrived, the 'rioters' (peasants) did not disperse until they suffered heavy casualties.¹⁰ At a village in north Munger the SDO with a police force had to withdraw as a large hostile crowd of about 8,000 people had collected.¹¹ The peasants had become so sure of their strength that in some cases they attempted to break up Aman Sabha meetings.¹² These Aman Sabhas were associations of the landlords of Bihar through which they openly denounced civil disobedience, using their influence in favour of British imperialism. The government was specially concerned about the movement taking violent forms.¹³ The increase in crime in districts where civil disobedience was intense was explained by the government as a general disrespect for law and order.¹⁴

Economic Nationalism

Thus, while civil disobedience was the immediate cause for the suspension of Kisan Sabha activities it also provided the circumstances in which the peasants began to participate in political movements actively and in ever large numbers. This was not merely because of Gandhi's call, but also because of the combination of economic factors with the political elements of nationalism.¹⁵ This economic nationalism was intensified by the effects of an unprecedented world-wide economic depression. The price of agricultural produce began to fall drastically about October 1930 and by December 1931 grain was selling at only half its 1929 price.¹⁶ For the Bihar tenants the depressed price-level created extraordinary difficulties. Throughout the region there were tenants who had taken up settlements of new lands in the 1920s at high rates. They now found it difficult to pay their rents. The same was true of those tenants who either had their produce rents commuted to cash rents during the years of high prices or had rents enhanced by the landlords through civil suits. The burden on the tenants increased all the more due to a series of natural disasters.¹⁷ It was the agrarian sector of the economy, the predominant sector in Bihar, which felt the full impact of the depression and it was to this section of the population that the Congress looked for support. However, the effect of the depression varied for different agrarian classes,¹⁸ as in U.P. Initially, absentee landlords and non-cultivating owners with substantial holdings were not seriously affected. But later when the tenants were unable to pay their rents and when after their eviction for arrears of rent, substitute tenants could offer only half the previous

rent demand, they too felt the pressure of the slump. In most cases, however, they had enough savings and credit to tide over the crisis. According to Dhanagare, poor peasants, at least initially, stood to gain since they could supplement their income from labour and wages which rose until 1931 and never fell below the 1921 level.¹⁹ It was in fact the rich and middle peasants (small zamindars and upper-caste rent receivers) whom the depression hit the hardest, since these were the groups most closely connected with market and hence most vulnerable to price fluctuations.²⁰ Apart from the debt burden (they were the most heavily indebted groups),²¹ which caused their lands to pass easily into the hands of creditors, evictions for arrears of rent were an added burden for these tenants.

Dhanagare's proposition with regard to the impact of the depression on small landlords and rich peasants is sound. But his theory about its impact on the poor peasants does not bear scrutiny. As was customary in Bihar, high-caste poor peasants could not supplement their income by working on other fields. Even the second category of low-caste poor peasants could not increase their income by labouring for others as the circumstances of their employers were themselves strained. A series of natural calamities which accompanied the depression in Bihar²² also made it difficult for even agricultural labourers to gain employment in villages.²³ The burden on poor peasants became all the heavier during a period of depression as they ran out of their cash reserves at the very time when the landlord was most likely to enhance rent because his income from his *zirat* land, which was normally kept for cash crops, was usually reduced.²⁴ On such occasions the political temper of the countryside could reach flash-point very quickly.²⁵

The distress of the peasantry was naturally far greater in those parts of Bihar where the system of produce-rent was most prevalent, for this system imposed a much heavier burden on the peasants in terms of the quantity of produce they had to surrender to the landlords. It is, however, wrong to suppose, as Walter Hauser did, that the kisan movement was mostly confined to the regions where this system of produce-rent prevailed. The intensity of the distress resulting from the depression varied from region to region but it was severe enough to produce deep discontent among the peasants all over Bihar.²⁶ If south Bihar was hit the hardest due to the prevalence of the produce-rent system, in north Bihar the tenants suffered mostly because of the slump in the prices of cash crops like jute, sugarcane, tobacco and chilly which the peasants of north Bihar ostensibly cultivated extensively to meet their rent demands.²⁷ If the peasants of Purnia district suffered due to a crash in jute prices, and those of some parts of Munger, Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur owing to a slump in the prices of tobacco which was almost 500 per cent and also of chilly, the peasants of Champaran suffered heavily due to the fall in the prices of sugarcane.

Our analysis of the agrarian situation shows that almost all sections of the peasantry were affected deeply by the depression but it was the middle peasants (with a surplus to sell) who were hit the hardest and it was to this class of peasant proprietors and small tenants (rather than share-croppers or agricultural labourers) that the Congress looked for support.²⁸

As the price collapse from the autumn of 1930 began to take catastrophic forms and prospects of the winter crop became bleak nearly all over Bihar,²⁹ the miseries of the peasants crossed limits. The bleak economic situation forced them to actively participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement. In some parts of Bihar adjoining U.P. the peasants even called upon Swami Sachidananda

Paribrajak, the President of the Deoria subdivision Kisan Sabha to take whatever steps he thought necessary to alleviate the miseries of the poor peasants of Gopalganj subdivision especially of Bhore and Kateya, which were under the Hathwa estate. The government was very concerned as the peasants of Kateya and Bhore police stations were the most turbulent in the province and had attacked and fired on the police.³⁰ It was all the more anxious because of the assistance they sought from Gorakhpur across the provincial border. Their reference to grievances against the Hathwa zamindari was looked upon by the government as a campaign against landholders.³¹ The government was also concerned as the peasants of 70 to 80 villages of the western parts of Saran district had gone to Baikunthpur (Gorakhpur) to attend Kisan Sabha meetings.³²

By the beginning of 1931 the Commissioner of Tirhut division presented a very 'pessimistic' view of the situation and feared recrudescence of civil disobedience of a violent nature and also considerable diminution of government and particularly of police prestige.³³ In Champaran district, a Court of Wards Tahsildar of the Bettiah raj was driven out of a village which he had visited for the collection of rent, and authorities noticed that the movement was on the increase in the whole of Bihar.³⁴ A sense of rivalry prevailed in the countryside. Every village wanted to have the honour of getting the largest number of people arrested.³⁵ The peasants sacrificed the utmost at the behest of the Congress.³⁶

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact

However, it was curious that in spite of peasant participation in the movement on such a large scale, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was made at the very moment when the movement was gathering momentum. It was perhaps because of the Gandhian leadership's faith in controlled mass participation as well as due to the pressure exerted by the bourgeoisie owing to their fear of peasant radicalism.³⁷ It is not surprising that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed in March 1931 without any reference to the peasants of India. It was not that Gandhi was unaware of the misery of the peasants. In a letter to the Viceroy, he wrote, 'The terrific pressure of land revenue which furnished a large part of the total must undergo considerable modification in an independent India. Even the much vaunted Permanent Settlement benefits the few rich zamindars, not the ryots. The ryot has remained as helpless as ever. He is a mere tenant-at-will. Not only, then, has the land revenue to be considerably reduced, but the whole revenue system has to be reviewed as to make the ryots' good its primary concern'.³⁸ The Gandhi-Irwin Pact left the peasants disillusioned.

It was perhaps to assuage the feelings of the peasants that the Karachi session of the Congress passed a resolution on fundamental rights and economic policy which has often been interpreted as a major concession to placate the left. The declaration reflected the objectives of important elements of the Indian population which supported the nationalist cause. It gave the Congress programme a content that could be expected to draw large segments of population into active participation in the nationalist movement.³⁹ Patel, the then President of the Congress, while introducing himself as a simple peasant, declared that the Congress existed for the toiling millions and it would become an irresistible force working not for greed or power but for the sake of common humanity.⁴⁰

The implications of the Karachi resolution caused anxiety to the government. It correctly thought that while in the past attempts had been made to render the administration impossible by attacking government schemes,

excise, salt, land revenue and *chaukidari* tax, the bait that would be dangled this time before the masses, if the Congress renewed the fight, would be a no-rent campaign.⁴¹ Although the government was sure that many of the Bihar Congress leaders, being themselves small landlords, would be against such agitation,⁴² it was afraid of the activities of the 'irresponsible' of the party whom it thought to be beyond the control of the provincial leadership. The Chief Secretary's proposition with regard to the first category of leaders who formed the majority in the Provincial Council was correct. He was aware that the Bihar delegates to the Karachi congress, most of whom belonged to the class of rural gentry, had opposed the Karachi resolution.⁴³ Mathura Prasad, a very important leader of the Bihar Congress, who later became one of the members of the Agrarian Enquiry Committee set up in the last month of 1931, moved a resolution with a view to delaying it but the amendment was defeated. Contrary to the government presumption, however, even the 'irresponsible' of the party were not beyond the control of the leadership. The left wing was still to emerge in Bihar and the grassroot level Congress workers still had faith in the good intentions of the Congress leadership. In order to counteract the alleged mischief of these 'irresponsibles' the Chief Secretary advised his officials to utilise every opportunity in demonstrating to those 'who had "any stake in the country and particularly to the leader landlords" how the declared policy of the Congress was "operating to their injury", and how support to the Congress or even continued neutrality would be fatal to their interests' ⁴⁴ He also asked his officials to advise the members of the Aman Sabha, the nucleus of government propaganda in every district, not to hold public meetings but do their propaganda by quiet talk and argument in their villages with their brother landlords and the better class of tenants.⁴⁵ The government's fear was baseless. The Congress, which had forged strong links with the rural gentry, was hardly the organisation to rouse the peasants and start a no-rent campaign. Actually the Bihar Congress leadership welcomed the March 1931 truce with a sense of relief, more so when enthusiasm among the small landlords and better-off tenants in the face of ruthless British attachment of property and punitive fines began to wane.⁴⁶

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact saw only a brief suspension of Congress activities from March to December. The government, too, stopped the reign of terror which it had unleashed for the suppression of the first phase of the movement. Although both the parties seemed to be honouring the truce, it was in fact an 'uneasy' one ⁴⁷

A combination of economic circumstances boosted the morale of the average Congress activist despite official Congress reluctance to take up a radical programme, thus producing a variety of pressures from below ⁴⁸ As the prices touched a record low, and revenue, rent and debt burdens became correspondingly unbearable, the deepening rural discontent increased militancy, which posed a serious threat to the policy of compromise now being sought to be followed by the official Congress leadership. The Congress had to support the peasant agitations started at the lower levels if it wanted to secure their continued support. This attitude of the Congress provoked secret official moves for a wholesale counter-offensive by the British and the 'truce' was made increasingly fragile. As the peasants were seething with discontent, they forced the local leaders to take up their cause. The provincial Congress leadership was in a fix. Working strictly within Gandhian limitations it could not extend full support to these agitations. But if it wanted to retain its mass base, the Congress had to

voice the sufferings of the peasants, pay at least lip service to their movement and assure them that the Congress was their party.

As in Khaira and Bardoli in Gujarat, the Congress had no difficulty where there was direct confrontation between the tenants and the government, or between the tenants and European landlords. Although not directly supporting non-payment of rent even to the government estates, the provincial Congress leadership allowed its district, subdivision or thana-level workers to agitate for the cause of the peasants. But it had great difficulty where the tenants started agitation against the native landlords. On account of the link it had forged with petty proprietors and substantial tenants and owing to Gandhi's continued insistence on paying the landlords their due, the Congress could not support any no-rent movement. However, it soon got over the crisis by acting as arbitrators between the two. It asked the kisans to send applications for rent reduction to the local Congress offices, which, in turn, would send them to the central office to enable the provincial leadership to take up the matter with the government. The bureaucracy, not unnaturally, disliked this tendency, considering it as an attempt to establish institutions parallel to those of the government.⁴⁹

The Champaran Movement

The movement started in Champaran for the non-payment of rent⁵⁰ and the agitation in Shahabad district against the enhancement in canal rates,⁵¹ illustrate our first point. About three-fourths of the total area of the district of Champaran was owned by the Bettiah estate⁵² which was then being administered under the Court of Wards. Most of the remaining area was owned on lease by European factories. The district was severely hit by a hailstorm in March which destroyed standing rabi crops.⁵³ To add to the sufferings of the poor tenants this natural calamity was followed by another severe damage to the crops when a large part of the district was inundated⁵⁴ in June and July. The peasants, who had already been groaning under the effects of the depression, were rendered incapable of paying their rents.

It was in these circumstances that the movement against payment of rent was started in many circles of the Bettiah estate by local Congressmen. Beating drums and ringing bells, they wandered from door to door, village to village, and instructed the tenants not to pay their rents as they were going to move the Collector and the Commissioner for remission of their rent.⁵⁵ A meeting was organised by them in which an overwhelming number of koeris and tenants of other castes participated.⁵⁶ The Congressmen assured the tenants that all their rents would be remitted by the Congress and the government. The Congress office asked the peasants to file their petitions if they had any objection to the higher rate of rent and wanted it to be reduced to a reasonable level.⁵⁷ As a result of their efforts, a large number of applications for the remission and reduction of rent were filed throughout the district of Champaran to the Manager of the Bettiah estate, the Collector of Champaran and other higher authorities,⁵⁸ and payment of rent was withheld for some months.⁵⁹

In the beginning the government took this movement very seriously and was willing to allow some relief to the peasants rather than leave plausible grounds for agitation.⁶⁰ But at the same time it held that the Congress agitation was not so much designed to help the rayats as to cause trouble to the authorities.⁶¹ So the Collector of Champaran, Swanzy, was instructed to issue communiques to contradict 'exaggerated' reports of the harrowing scenes and deaths from starvation circulated by the Congress.⁶²

The agitation, however, proved to be short-lived. Started by local Congressmen, it remained within the limits imposed by Gandhian principles. It was not directed against any native landlords. The provincial leadership continued to honour the truce. Although Rajendra Prasad visited the area, and Bipin Bihari Verma, the District Congress President, was in correspondence with the government for the suspension of rent for the whole of the district,⁶³ no attempt was made by them to mobilise the peasants. Naturally, in the absence of guidance from the district or provincial leadership, the movement fizzled out. The government made no remission of rent in any part of the district. It was suspended only to the extent of 50 to 75 per cent in those villages and circles which were hit hard by the hailstorm of March.⁶⁴ Thus, even the benefit of suspension was given only to Bettiah, Motihari and a small portion of the Tirkaulia circle.⁶⁵

The people now realised that it was no use continuing their struggle. Instead of applying for reduction or remission of rent through the Congress they were now ready to apply direct to the Collector or the Manager.⁶⁶ The government, on its part, did not allow the Congress to take any credit for the suspension of rent. The Commissioner of Tirhut division wrote to the Collector of Champaran, 'At present the Congress represents government as the indifferent stay-at-home, who does nothing for the terrible suffering, while Congress with bleeding heart does all the relief. This is a travesty of the facts and your communiques should make it clear and correct the false impression'.⁶⁷

The Bettiah estate decided that whatever relief was to be given was final as 'doling out relief piecemeal would amount to working at the desire of the Congress'.⁶⁸ The government asked the estate to announce widely that no further suspension or remission would be granted and that the raiyats must not be misled by Congress workers or others promising to secure any future concession.⁶⁹ It was done and the movement fell through very quickly within a couple of months and thus an opportunity of mobilising the peasants was lost owing to the negligence of the Congress leadership.

The result of this indifferent attitude of the Congress was disastrous. When the prospect of a breakdown at the Round Table Conference forced the Congress to renew its activities and mobilise peasants to lend support to the second phase of the movement, the peasants in their turn were not so enthusiastic. It was in the last week of November, two months after the collapse of the movement, that Rajendra Prasad complained to the Board of Revenue and to the government that the Court of Wards did not listen to the complaints of the raiyats and that certificates were being unnecessarily filed against tenants. The government rightly interpreted Prasad's attempt as creating a favourable atmosphere for agitation in the district where the assistance given by Gandhi was still remembered and when a no-rent campaign would not affect the Indian landlords but would be a campaign against the government as represented by the Bettiah Court of Wards, and against some of the *thikadars* who were still in the district.⁷⁰ As the officials had seen, the district leaders began to preach non-payment of rent and opposition by force to any attempt to collect it.⁷¹ But there was no encouraging response from the tenants of Champaran.

The Shahabad Agitation

Not satisfied with the response of the Champaran peasants, the Congress turned to another turbulent area of Bihar bordering U.P. — the district of Shahabad where the peasants started an agitation against the irrigation tax. Most of the

area was irrigated by the Sone canal which was managed by the government, and the income which came in the form of irrigation tax also filled the coffers of the government. It had the sole authority to enhance or reduce the tax. If an agitation was started for the reduction of water tax in Shahabad district, it would not involve struggle with native landlords. Thus without harming the interests of the landlords the grievance of the peasants could be voiced and their much-needed support secured. In fact in the agitation for the reduction of canal rates the Congress got the support of the leading landlords of the area. In a discussion with Baldeo Sahay and other Congress leaders they held, 'if the current prices remain at their present rate for a period of 7 to 8 years not only would it be absolutely essential to have a substantial reduction in the canal rates but also that rent be decreased'.⁷² On hearing that the landlords had discussions with the Congress leaders with regard to these matters, the Collector of the district became furious and told them emphatically to have absolutely nothing to do with the Congress people in this matter in future and to try to persuade their tenants also not to do so.⁷³ He added that the government was prepared to put down with a firm hand any agitation of that nature and that they should behave accordingly.⁷⁴

Before Shri Krishna Sinha, Abdul Bari and Baldeo Sahay, three important prominent Congress leaders, toured various areas of the district of Shahabad in order to hold an enquiry into the grievances of the tenants with regard to canal rates, the District Congress Committee had got a notice entitled *nahar ki masuli ki janch* (Enquiry into the canal rates) widely circulated among the tenants.⁷⁵ Naturally large numbers of tenants gathered to hear the speeches of these Congress leaders. While justifying their grievances they told them to remain non-violent. They, along with two Congress leaders of the district, Gupteshwar Pandey and Bindhyachal, toured the district from 28 November to 29 November 1931 and noted down the complaints of the raiyats.⁷⁶ Though the Collector of Shahabad viewed this as being connected with the no-rent and no-revenue campaign in progress everywhere, it was nothing more than an attempt at gaining cheap popularity. The short duration of their visit and speeches they delivered at various places indicate clearly that they had come there to pay lip service to the grievances of the people.

The provincial Congress leaders did not ask the district level workers to continue the movement. Instead they tried to settle the matter as soon as possible by negotiation with the government. The Working Committee of the Provincial Congress Committee at its meeting held at Sadaqat Ashram, Patna on 23 and 24 December 1931 discussed the report of the Canal Enquiry Committee and passed a resolution that 'on account of great distress in rural areas the government should be approached with a request to reduce the canal rates to the level of those which prevailed in the year when the prices of food-stuffs were the same as those current in the present year and further to postpone realisation till February next'.⁷⁷

Accordingly Rajendra Prasad wrote a letter to M. G. Hallett, Chief Secretary to the government of Bihar and Orissa on 24 December 1931. Analysing the depression-prices of food-stuffs and increase in canal rates, he requested the government to reduce the canal rate and postpone its realisation till February next. The Chief Secretary informed him that the government was looking into the matter. But all this ended in smoke. The request of the Congress was sure to be rejected as it was not backed by the force of popular agitation.

What emerges from a study of the Congress support to the peasants' grievances in Champaran and Shahabad is that although the Congress had no hesitation in raising the grievances of the peasants vis-a-vis the government, its support to such movements was limited. It never thought of starting a no-rent or no-tax campaign, even where there was direct confrontation with the government. It found itself in a difficult situation where the native landlords were involved. It had to justify the demands of the peasants as they formed the bulk of its supporters. At the same time it could not antagonise the landlords and their interests as it was working under the Gandhian framework of class collaboration. 'Whilst we will not hesitate to advise the kisans when the movement comes to suspend payment of taxes to the government, it is not contemplated that at any stage of non-cooperation we would seek to deprive the zamindars of their rent. The Kisan movement must be confined to the improvement of the status of the kisans and the betterment of the relations between the zamindar and them'.⁷⁸ But what was more important was that the Congress could not afford to disturb the rural power structure dominated by the Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayasths,⁷⁹ who provided the leadership at provincial as well as district, subdivision and village levels.

Honouring the Truce

Meanwhile the economic situation in the whole of Bihar worsened. While the peasants of south Bihar were suffering from the effects of the depression, especially when the crash in prices forced them to part with a major share of the produce,⁸⁰ those of north Bihar were groaning under the burden of the damage caused to their standing crops by severe floods. Devastating floods destroyed standing crops in Purnia, north Bhagalpur, Munger, Darbhanga and Champaran, Purnea, a tobacco and jute growing district, which had already been severely affected by the world-wide slump in prices, was the most severely affected. The rayats of this district were reported to be selling their gold and silver ornaments and surrendering their holdings at low rates.⁸¹ The poor people responded to this by indulging in social banditry. Crimes due to the effects of depression were also reported from Saran.⁸²

Even in this grim economic situation the landlords of Bihar continued to harass the tenants. The landlords of Bihar are said not to be adapting themselves to changed circumstances but are filing rent-suits against their tenants in particular for enhancement of rent—a line of action which will play into the hands of the agitators', complained a government official.⁸³ The situation was really anomalous. The landlords were trying to force up the rent of the peasants at a time when they had lost the capacity to pay even the rent arrears.

In spite of all this the Congress in Bihar honoured the truce. Not to speak of starting or supporting a no-rent campaign, the provincial Congress leaders did not think of giving even verbal support to the grievances of the peasants. It was in this background of Congress quiescence that grassroot-level workers started mobilising the tenants and the young and left elements of the Congress attempted to form a Socialist Party at Patna. A Peasant Conference was held at Jahanabad on 30 and 31 May 1931 at which the repression of the tenants by the landlords of Gaya district was condemned in unequivocal terms, and a resolution was passed to appoint a committee to investigate tenants' grievances.⁸⁴ The president of the Conference sent a copy of the resolution to the District Magistrate, Gaya, requesting him to remit half the cash rent and half the appraised crops.⁸⁵ In Munger district the Congress workers were reported to be

telling people not to pay rent enhanced by the civil courts⁸⁶ In Shahabad Swami Bhawani Dayal was active and appeared to the government to be 'trying to organising a no-rent campaign'⁸⁷

It was in response to these pressures from below that the provincial leadership had to set up an Agrarian Enquiry Committee under the presidentship of Rajendra Prasad This Committee met at Sadaquat Ashram, Patna on 28 August 1931 when members of the Committee were requested to take up enquiry work in different districts Shri Krishna Sinha, Abdul Bari, Bipin Behari Verma, Baldeo Sahay, Ambika Kant Sinha, Prajapati Mishra, Radha Govind Prasad and K.B Sahay were present on the occasion⁸⁸

The presence of these members throws interesting light on the class character of the top Congress leadership in Bihar With the exception of K B Sahay and Abdul Bari, all of them belonged to the landlord class and came from high castes This indicates the kind of support the Congress in Bihar was going to lend to the peasant movement How could these rent-receivers preach in terms of a no-rent campaign and threaten the village power structure which provided them top place in that hierarchy? For the time being, however, the setting up of this Enquiry Committee (the report of which was never published) roused high hopes among the tenants of Bihar

The leadership of the Congress at district levels, especially where it was formed by tenants, was inspired by the formation of the Enquiry Committee They began to mobilise the tenants to express their views explicitly when the Congress Committee visited their respective areas Jugal Kishore Singh got circulated among the raryats of Gaya a hand-bill signed by himself It drew the attention of the tenants to the hard treatment of their zamindars and advised them to send their complaints to the Agrarian Enquiry Committee⁸⁹ Pandit Jadunandan Sharma welcomed the decision of the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee to form an Enquiry Committee of four members, namely, Rajendra Prasad, Babu Siddheshwar Prasad Singh, Baba Ramodar Das and Babu Mathura Prasad to look into the grievances of the tenants of Gaya district⁹⁰ He asked the tenants of those areas of Gaya where there were greater hardships and where undue pressure was being brought by the zamindars for realisation of rents, to communicate to the Subdivisional or District Congress Committee their grievances or troubles, giving their names and addresses, their financial condition and land held by them, the account of rent and the condition of crops⁹¹ In the same breath he requested the zamindars to send their information regarding excesses perpetrated by the raryats, emphasising the fact that it was the desire of the Congress Committee to 'restore and maintain cordial relations between the landlords and the tenants'⁹² The last part of the hand-bill makes it quite clear that the Congress took every care not to hurt the sentiments of the landlords Apart from Gaya peasants and their leaders were active in other districts also The government compared their attempts with those of the Congress in U.P., and thought that, emboldened by the government's decision to order 50 per cent remission in U.P., the Congress in Bihar too wanted to organise the peasants⁹³

As a result of the intensive propaganda by the peasants in the western part of Patna district, the landlords became very scared A noted leader of the landlords of Bihar, Rajandhari Singh, whose family was a notorious oppressor of the tenants,⁹⁴ met Sir James Sifton, a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, and urged that 'the local officials should personally see the zamindars of that area individually and warn them that they would be well-advised to remit the abwabs (which he admitted they were collecting) and should give no ground on which

the agitation could build'.⁹⁵ This personal effort on the part of a noted leader of the Bihar aristocracy indicates the nervousness and fear of the leading landlords of Bihar. They were so scared that some of them granted large remissions and did not file rent suits which were usually filed before 29 September. The Raja of Amawan, one of the biggest landlords of Bihar, made remission equivalent to one lakh of rupees,⁹⁶ and intended to remit another four lakhs. Likewise concessions were given in Kumar Rani's estate in Aurangabad. The Rani reduced commuted rents by 12 per cent for those commuted by the Settlement Department and 25 per cent for those commuted later.⁹⁷

The Raja of Amawan's remission of rent was communicated to Rajendra Prasad just before the latter presided at a Congress meeting at Gaya and was first publicly announced by him. This attempt of the Raja was seen by the government as something to make himself popular with the rayats, with the government and the Congress party alike. But the Commissioner of Patna told him that due to his action the Congress would get the credit of having induced him to make the remission and its prestige would be boosted.⁹⁸

The above-mentioned cases, however, do not suggest that all the landlords were scared of peasant action. In fact some of them filed suits, not as a means of recovering dues but merely as a tactical move against the 'refractory' tenants who were under the influence of the Congress.⁹⁹ These acts of the landlords and their *amlas* forced the local Kisan Sabhas to make efforts to arouse the tenants. At one place the tenants under Kisan Sabha influence succeeded in boycotting the *amlas* of landlords, resulting in local hajams, dhobis and others refusing to serve them.¹⁰⁰ The grassroot-level Congress workers and peasant leaders, despite the reluctance of the provincial leadership to take up peasant grievances, wanted to be guided by it but, ironically enough, acted as a restraining influence on the movement.¹⁰¹ The prospect of a breakdown in the Round Table Conference and the spread of the Congress-led agrarian movement in U.P. led to increased Congress activities in the province.¹⁰² When the Congress leaders saw that there might be a revival of the Civil Disobedience Movement they began to participate in the Kisan Sabha meetings, so as to show themselves as friends of the tenants, and thus enlist their support in the ensuing struggle. Two very important Congress leaders of the province, Shri Krishna Sinha and Anugraha Narayan Sinha participated in a Kisan Sabha meeting at Paliganj, an area of big landlords. Their speeches signalled the beginning of the process which culminated in the launching of the second Civil Disobedience Movement.¹⁰³ Close on the heels of this meeting the Congress leaders, Rajendra Prasad, Shri Krishna Sinha and Mathura Prasad, visited some disturbed areas of Gaya where the local leaders of the Congress had been working up tenants to organise Kisan Sabhas, and instructing them not to pay rents.¹⁰⁴

From 8 to 12 December 1931 these leaders recorded the grievances of the tenants and addressed several meetings. In their speeches nowhere did they incite the tenants against payment of rent.¹⁰⁵ An analysis of the speeches of Rajendra Prasad and Shri Krishna Sinha at Aurangabad, where there was a gathering of thousands of cultivators, shows how far the Congress was ready to go in Bihar. Rajendra Prasad advised tenants to eliminate the element of fear from their hearts, to organise themselves for the next fight and to help the Congress which in its turn was ready to help the peasants. In the same breath he assured the landlords that he was not assisting the kisans against them,¹⁰⁶ and advised the tenants to maintain cordial relations with their landlords and not to listen to anybody who told them to stop the payment of rent.¹⁰⁷ Shri Krishna Sinha, the

future Prime Minister of Bihar and the first Secretary of the Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha also spoke in exactly the same vein. Speaking of Gandhi as God-incarnate he asked peasants to follow his advice, refrain from any violent activities and pay rent to their landlords.¹⁰⁸

The very short duration of the tour of the Congress leaders too indicates that the enquiry was merely an eye-wash and that the Congress in Bihar was trying to make political capital out of the economic grievances of the peasants. It was this attitude of the Congress leadership in Bihar which compelled the young and left-oriented generation of the Congress to think afresh about the problems of the peasants. This younger section wanted to follow U.P. and Gujarat but a moderating influence was exercised over this section by 'more responsible and thoughtful leaders of the Congress, especially Babu Braj Kishore Prasad and Babu Rajendra Prasad'.¹⁰⁹

Although this moderating influence of the elder leaders continued to work the younger section founded the Bihar Socialist party in December 1931.¹¹⁰ Abdul Bari, Jayaprakash Lal (later on Narayan), Phulan Prasad Verma, Mahendra Narayan Roy, Satyanarayan Singh, Kishori Prasanna Singh and Ambika Kant Singh were reported to be its founder members.¹¹¹ Later Kishori Prasanna Singh denied that he was a member of the new party. The formation of this new party did not break new ground. They were not so powerful as to start a no-rent campaign by themselves. So far as the Congress was concerned, the government had no doubt that there was 'no possibility of a no-rent campaign being started in Bihar' as the Congress leaders 'belonged to the zamindar class themselves' and could not possibly think of launching a class war in the province.¹¹²

Thus despite official charges of Congress instigation there is ample evidence to show that the Congress leadership acted on the whole as a restraining force.¹¹³ Although peasant agitations from the grassroot-level forced on this leadership a growing recognition of the importance of questions of agrarian relations and compelled them to champion the cause of the peasants, the Congress in Bihar managed to get the support of this class without doing anything concrete for them.

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60 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

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PEASANTS AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT IN BIHAR 61

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BOOK REVIEW

'A Conspicuous Model of Peace'

SUJATHA PATEL, *The Making of Industrial Relations The Ahmedabad Textile Industry 1918-1939*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987.

Sujata Patel's is a straightforward book. She begins with a sociologist's concern to explain why industrial relations in Ahmedabad in recent years have been a 'conspicuous model of peace' (p 1) and moves on to a historian's concern with how all this came about. Patel's is a fascinating subject, largely because it was Gandhi's intervention that made possible a certain kind of capital-labour relationship in Ahmedabad. Gandhi's relation with his peasant followers has been the subject of many interesting monographs and essays in recent Indian history writing; but Gandhi's relation with the industrial working class has not been probed so far.

Two main strands are explored in the book, the history of the cotton mill industry in Ahmedabad and the parallel growth of the labour movement. In the beginning an attempt is made to trace the history of Ahmedabad as a city with long traditions as a manufacturing centre of textile products. The institutions of the '*mahajan*' and '*panch*'—guilds of the merchants and artisans—as well as that of the '*nagarseth*' are outlined. Patel believes that the tradition of the '*nagarseth*' as an arbitrator was carried over to the modern industrial setting in Ahmedabad and helped to solve conflicts between labour and capital. The traditional merchant elite of Ahmedabad took the initiative for starting the modern cotton mill industry during British rule. Patel suggests (p 20) that the rise of modern industry destroyed traditional handicrafts. She also seems to suggest (p 27) that the ruined artisans were the new recruits in this modern industry. Although she is hesitant to draw this conclusion, her evidence is certainly a useful corrective to the nationalist critique which held the British solely responsible for 'deindustrialisation'. However Patel tells us nothing about what the workers felt about abandoning their time-honoured professions to enter a factory. She complains of lack of evidence before 1918—a problem which bedevils all researchers on labour in India. It is surprising that she has not used the Indian Industrial Commission's (1916-1918) evidence volumes and the special report that A E Mirams submitted on 'Industrial Employees' to the Commission, which has some interesting material on Ahmedabad.

The history of the Ahmedabad textile industry has been studied in detail by Patel. The cotton mills were wholly owned by Indians and over the years it developed as a significant rival to Lancashire. Patel shows convincingly how the imposition of excise duty and the Lancashire pressure pushed the AMA (Ahmedabad Millowners' Association) towards nationalism and support of Gandhi. Less convincing however is her history of the labour movement spear-headed by the TLA (Textile Labour Association), founded in 1920 by Gandhi after his famous intervention in 1918 in favour of the mill workers. In Gandhi's

scheme of things both capital and labour had rights and obligations towards each other. If the worker could demand a decent human standard of living, the employer expected the worker to be considerate in his demands and relate these to the 'health of the industry' (p.44), a term that was deliberately left vague, as Patel points out. Thus the mill-owners always backtracked on arbitration (established after the 1921 strike) whenever the mill industry faced a crisis or depression. The 1923 strike proved disastrous for the workers. The period up to 1939 which saw the arbitration machinery enshrined in the Bombay Industrial Disputes and Relations Bill was a familiar one of pressure, retreat and compromise by the working class till the AMA accepted arbitration as the best strategy for a long-term peaceful relationship with workers.

Patel calls this process hegemonisation, thereby accepting the arbitration machinery. Capital gained the upper hand over labour. But one is not sure how this hegemony came about. From her evidence it seems more like tactical strategy and political expediency by AMA than any overarching hegemony that led to this settlement. As Patel shows, there were too many conflicts within the AMA for it to have acted in so monolithic a manner. Similarly, by her own admission, the TLA at its best represented only 25 per cent of the workers (p. 85). Yet in her discussion of TLA the equation 'TLA equal to labour movement' seems to be an inescapable conclusion. One wonders about the hopes and fears of the remaining 75 per cent of the workers. This labouring force was far from being unilaterally nationalistic in the Gandhian way. During the Rowlatt Satyagraha in 1919, the mill-hands went on a rampage destroying 51 government buildings in Ahmedabad alone (K. Gillon, 'Rowlatt Satyagraha in Gujarat 1919', in R. Kumar (ed.) *Essays in Gandhian Politics*, Oxford, 1971, (p. 137). Janet Harvey Kelman who visited India in 1920-21, asked an Ahmedabad mill worker why she was on strike, got the reply, 'the Raj has said we must not work' (J. H. Kelman, *Labour in India: A Study of the Conditions of Indian Women in Modern Industry*, London, 1923, (p. 111). The workers had clearly many loyalties and in this context Patel's blanket statement that 'for the workers nationalist feelings were superimposed over those of class conflict' (p. 94) is too general to be of any relevance. Incidentally, both Gillon's essay and Kelman's book do not find a mention in Patel's bibliography.

Patel argues that hegemonic domination was possible because the workers showed militancy. Cannot it also be argued, as Dipesh Chakarabarty has done (in *Subaltern Studies Vol III*), that the ideology of the ruling classes are often crucially modified by the limitations that working class culture sets on that ideology? And finally, all through the book, Patel talks of labour without distinguishing between male and female workers. There is not even the obligatory census chart showing the sex-ratio of the Ahmedabad cotton mill workers.

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'MAY DAY'

"There will come a time when our
silence will be more powerful than
the voices you strangle today."

(Last words from the workers who were executed
on the scaffold on 11 November, 1887)

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Four Decades of Economic Development II

Disproportionality and the Services Sector Ashok Mitra	3
Intersectoral Terms of Trade, Agricultural Growth and the Pattern of Demand Jayati Ghosh	9
Fiscal Crisis and the Monetary System Amal Sanyal	28
Note: A Profile of Rural Indebtedness P. K Tandon	49
Book Review: The Tribal Economy: Continuity or Change? Geetha B. Singh	64
Book Review: A New Look at Political Economy R. Ramana	68

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1 A Eckstein, China's Economic Revolution, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977

2 See R. Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', Journal of Comparative Economics December 1979, pp 325-45

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Editorial Note

In the current number of *Social Scientist* we bring together some more of the papers which were presented at the seminar, organised by this journal, on four decades of India's economic development. The objective of that seminar was not so much to discuss the political economy of post-independence Indian development in its broad *generalities*, but to look at the *changes* which have taken place, and are taking place, in the economic scenario, i.e., to work upwards from the broad parameters of political economy to a discussion of current trends. The papers presented in this issue fall within this general rubric. Their perceptions of the basic parameters of political economy, e.g., the precise nature of class-relations underlying the Indian State, may not always be congruent, but each of them builds a story taking cognisance of some aspect of contemporary Indian economic reality.

A notable feature of the economy in recent years has been the rapid growth of the tertiary sector and within it, in particular, of public administration and defence. Indeed the recent acceleration in economic growth, so proudly proclaimed by the Planning Commission, is entirely on account of this burgeoning tertiary sector, which is the theme of the lead article by Ashok Mitra. He draws attention in particular to two distinct aspects of the growth of the tertiary sector. First, while it is a fact that in almost all capitalist countries the tertiary sector grew rapidly at a *certain stage of development*, so that in the sequence of growth it was the secondary sector which was envisaged first and then the tertiary sector, in India the rapid expansion of the tertiary sector has occurred even while the share of the secondary sector in GDP has remained virtually unchanged. Unlike elsewhere, in other words, our tertiary sector growth is not following upon a long phase of rapid industrialisation, but is occurring in the absence of it. Secondly, in other countries, together with tertiary sector growth there was a shift of employment towards this sector, while in our case the increase in the tertiary sector's share in GDP is not accompanied by any change in its share of overall employment. The character of our tertiary sector growth therefore is *sui generis*. Not only is it a parasitic growth, but by virtue of that very fact, likely to choke off the growth of the basic commodity producing sectors.

•

Together with this pattern of inter-sectoral growth, there has been in recent years a particular pattern of inter-sectoral terms of trade movement, which is analysed in the paper by Jayati Ghosh. Expressing scepticism on the traditional argumentation regarding the causes and consequences of shifts in inter-sectoral terms of trade, she suggests that the terms of trade movement against agriculture since the mid-seventies has had the effect of the growth of incomes, especially in the urban services sector, incorporating public administration and defence. The demand generated by these rising incomes is oriented much more towards luxury goods, especially consumer durables, and is much less food-intensive compared to the demand pattern of those who are losers from the terms of trade shift. The observed decline in the share of cereals in total consumption expenditure on the one hand, and the observed boom which is occurring on the other hand in the production and assembly of durable consumption goods such as televisions, VCRs and passenger vehicles, are both linked to this change in income distribution.

Amal Sanyal's analysis of the fiscal crisis, embedded within an interesting discussion of the political economy of monetary policy in India, also has a bearing upon this pattern of inter-sectoral growth. The State in India rests upon a 'coalition' of classes, and he distinguishes between two different elements of costs incurred in maintaining this coalition. On the one hand, the State has to arbitrate between the claims of the different constituents of this coalition, and inevitably ends up doling out large and growing amounts in the form of transfer payments to these constituents. On the other hand, precisely for playing this arbitrating role, and protecting this coalition from attacks from the oppressed, it has to incur a large and growing expenditure upon the bureaucracy and the military and paramilitary forces. The result is a rapid increase in government current expenditure, which since it is not matched by appropriate taxation upon the dominant classes, leads to a fiscal crisis, a choking off of government's productive investment, and a tendency towards stagnation in the material commodity-producing sectors.

It is unfortunate that we cannot publish the discussion which followed the presentation of each of these papers at the seminar. We do hope nonetheless that the readers would find the papers stimulating and provocative.

ASHOK MITRA*

Disproportionality and the Services Sector: A Note

1 One major departure in the trends of national income growth in India in the past decade is the sudden spurt in the rate of growth in tertiary activities, that is, in the services sector

*Table 1: National Income by Sectors of Industrial Origin at 1970-71
Prices (Rs Crores)*

	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71	1975-76	1984-85
Agriculture and allied activities	10001	13596	16980	18777	21861
Manufacturing, construction and mining	2954	4211	7117	8348	12783
Tertiary activities of which defence and public administration	4275	6441	10222	13030	23010
		769	1635	2238	5517
Total net domestic product	17230	24258	34519	40155	57654

Source: Central Statistical Organisation, *National Accounts Statistics*, various issues

For twenty-five years following Independence, growth in service activities was more or less in consonance with that in the primary and secondary sectors. In most years, in fact, the rate of growth of income in the services sector was close to the weighted mean of the rates of growth in agriculture and industry. This pattern has been deviated

from in recent years. Since 1970-71, real income in the country's primary sector, mostly consisting of agriculture and allied activities, has grown at the annual rate of around 2 per cent. The corresponding rate of growth in the secondary sector, comprising manufacturing, electricity, gas, water supply, and construction, has been a little above 4 per cent per annum. In contrast, in the nation's tertiary sector, the rate of growth has averaged to something like 6 per cent. Agriculture has grown in real terms by barely 40 per cent since 1970-71, and industrial activities by around 70 per cent, the over all increase in the services sector has however been of the order of 130 per cent, while that in defence and public administration has been almost 350 per cent. Should we concentrate our attention on the past ten years, the annual rate of growth in the services sector would appear to be even higher (see Table 1)

2. This acceleration in the rate of growth of services in the recent period is reflected in the shifting composition of aggregate national income. In the 1950s, services constituted roughly a quarter of the national income. In the sixties, the proportion of national income originating in service activities gradually crept to around 30 per cent. It however started mounting in the seventies, and latest estimates suggest that it is now close to 40 per cent of national income (Table 2).¹ According to a recent official statement, this proportion is likely to continue to increase further, and by the beginning of the twenty-first century, as much as one-half of India's national income would be contributed by services.

*Table 2 National Income by Sectors of Industrial Origin
(% Distribution)*

	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71	1975-76	1984-85
Agriculture and allied activities	54.04	56.05	49.19	46.76	37.91
Manufacturing, construction and mining	17.14	17.36	20.62	20.79	22.17
Tertiary activities of which defence and public administration	24.81	26.59	31.19	32.45	39.91

3. If this indeed comes about, it would connote a major development. Till the early 1960s, agriculture and allied activities made up for 55 per cent of national income or thereabouts, and were acknowledged as the leading sectors in the economy. The proportion of agricultural income in the aggregate national income declined in the subsequent years, but till the mid-seventies this proportion was still higher than

45 per cent and agriculture remained the nation's principal economic activity. It is no longer so. Should current trends continue, this place will now be taken by services. Equally worth noticing, while the proportion of national output originating in agriculture has gone down in the past quarter of a century by as much as one-third, the secondary sector has failed to gain. The share of manufacturing and construction in national output continues to hover around 22 to 23 per cent, not much of an improvement over where it was three decades ago. The services sector has, to all appearances, overtaken the secondary sector.

4 There is of course nothing unusual *per se* in the emergence of services as the principal sector of economic activity. In the advanced industrial economies, they already occupy this position. Even in countries relatively less developed, the resource endowment may be such that services come to play a central role. In a small country with a salubrious climate, tourism could emerge as the dominant economic activity. There are also economies like Singapore and Hongkong, or for that matter, Panama, where certain special features pertaining to trade and payment arrangements could influence the course of events and lead to the emergence of services as the principal economic sector.

Table 3 *The Services Sector and National Economy*

	<i>Proportion of National Income Originating in the Services Sector (%)</i>	<i>Proportion of Working Population in the Ser- vices Sector (%)</i>
Argentina, 1941	52.2	43.8
Australia, 1949-50	50.4	53.3
Austria, 1951	32.5	34.8
Canada, 1952	43.2	45.3
Chile, 1940	50.6	39.3
Denmark, 1952	39.2	42.6
Finland, 1952	30.4	31.6
France, 1938	35.1	39.2
West Germany, 1953	32.1	39.2
Italy, 1951	31.0	29.3
Japan, 1952	42.3	38.3
Netherlands, 1950	42.6	45.8
New Zealand, 1947	39.4	47.7
Norway, 1950	51.8	38.0
Philippines, 1940	33.7	27.1
Sweden, 1939	32.8	35.8
U S A , 1950	42.2	46.4

Source: Colin Clark, *The Conditions of Economic Progress*, London, 1960, Chapter X, Table I.

5 But the recent Indian phenomenon has a specificity. In the countries just referred to, the rise in the proportion of national income originating in services was matched by a corresponding increase in the proportion of the nation's working force finding employment in the sector. A rough parity was maintained in the two proportions. This is confirmed by the historical data, covering a cross section of countries, assembled in Colin Clark's opus, *The Conditions of Economic Progress* (Table 3). It will be seen that a higher or lower share of services in the national income, was accompanied by a correspondingly higher or lower proportion of the working population engaged in the service industries. In contrast, in India while the proportion of national income originating in services has shot up to 40 per cent in the more recent years, the working force engaged in this sector continues to stagnate at below 20 per cent of the total, and while agricultural output has declined to around 37 per cent of national income, two-thirds of the working force continue to be in agriculture, as they were three decades ago.²

6 Another contrast also deserves mention. With respect to most of the countries and periods referred to by Colin Clark, the per capita income in the services sector does not exceed the level of per capita income in either agriculture or industry by more than 50 per cent, in quite a number of cases, the spread is even thinner.³ Available data suggests that in contrast, in India the per capita income outside the farm sector, including in the services, is at least four to five times as high as in agriculture.⁴

7 There is therefore a seeming disproportionality in the recent shift in the composition of India's national income. The explosion in service activities cannot be readily attributed to any impulse transmitted by the sectors engaged in material production. It has an autonomous character and is a kind of superimposition on the natural forces of historical evolution. Also missing in our case is the shift in working population away from the material-producing sectors to service occupations as has taken place elsewhere.

8. In this context, the fact that within the services sector the highest rate of growth is being registered in public administration and defence, that is, in the arena of government activities, is of considerable significance. This expansion in the government sector has with causal relationship with developments in either agriculture or industry. The convention followed in computing the growth of income in the government sector is also of some relevance here. In the case of other sectors, it is the expansion of physical output which is reflected in, and emerges as, an increase in national income. For activities in the government sector, the procedure of estimation is the obverse: the increment in income is taken as additional output, which gets reflected as growth in national income.

9 What holds for the government sector holds equally for other such service activities as banking, insurance, transport and communications. National income currently being generated in these spheres is at a rate much higher than the rate of expansion in the material-producing sectors.

10 There are a number of obvious economic implications of this skewed pattern of national income growth in the recent period. The rate of growth has shown a decline in the primary and secondary sectors, but the proportion of the total working force maintained by these sectors remains more or less unchanged, the relative economic burden of maintaining the working force has therefore increased for them. In contrast, since the rate of growth in service activities has been faster while the proportion of the working force engaged in them has not increased, this sector is carrying a relatively lighter burden.

11 Within the services sector, a distinction may be drawn between defence and public administration on the one hand and such activities as banking, insurance, tourism and communications on the other. For public administration and defence, since expenditure determines income and additional outlay emerges as additional output, the capital-output ratio is extraordinarily low, and often close to unity. But an illusory quality inheres to this low value of the capital coefficient. A large part of the relevant expenditure does not lead to capital formation and therefore has no long-term significance for growth, for the rate of income growth to continue, expenditure has to be repeated year in and year out. In contrast, such activities as banking, insurance, tourism and communications are capital-intensive, and the recent emphasis to accelerate the pace of modernisation has made them even more so.

12 What unites the two segments of the service sector is their superior rate of growth compared to the other sectors of the economy, a growth which does not depend upon autonomous factors and has, in the past decade, been engineered by particular government decisions. It is at least worth speculating whether one major consideration influencing the government is not the quality of serendipity that has come to be associated with outlay in the services sector. Agricultural growth has been petering out, the so-called new agricultural strategy has exhausted itself, the existing irrigation capacity has been almost fully utilised, structural reforms are to be ruled out. In the industrial sector too, the rate of growth has been unable to climb back to what obtained in the fifties and the early sixties. The lack of purchasing power in the hands of the nation's overwhelming majority has emerged as an important constraint of growth, exports have not provided the escape route hoped for earlier, and the impulse generated by the luxury consumption sector is much too feeble. The cumulative consequence is

creeping economic stagnation. The services sector, especially public administration and defence, shows the way out of the stagnation. A relatively low outlay here pushes up the rate of national income growth. While initially other considerations must have determined the expansion of defence and public administration, the fact that such expansion can accelerate the pace of economic growth, as conventionally measured, must have contributed to the decision-making process too. The government's anxiety to induct foreign technology and capital with the object of changing the climate of industrial investment has at the same time also led to a purposive decision to expand and modernise banking, insurance, telecommunication arrangements, facilities for tourism, etc.

13 Have we here entered a trap of circularity? Growth in agriculture and industry is sluggish, to get over this frustrating experience in the material-producing sectors, the authorities pay extra attention to the services sector, which is encouraged to expand at a furious pace. But in order that this acceleration might become sustainable, considerably enlarged outlays have to be earmarked for this sector. As a result, there is a squeeze on resources available for agriculture and industry, further inhibiting their rate of growth. The depressed rate of growth in the material-producing sectors however, once more goads the government to concentrate with even greater intensity than before on the services sector and to continue drawing resources away from elsewhere. This then becomes a self-processing mechanism: the crisis in material-production contributes to the shift in favour of services, and this shift aggravates the crisis in material-production.

14 Income grows in the services sector, but there is no proportionate increase in the absorption of the working force. The burden of unemployment and under-employment in agriculture and industry intensifies. Should the rate of growth of material output fall short of the rate of growth of population—as it might happen in some years—other things remaining the same, the outcome could be widespread social distress. If the modality of official resource-raising further adds to this distress, the system may simply break down.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 The new series on national accounts statistics released by the Central Statistical Organisation for the period 1980-81 to 1984-85 and the quick estimates for 1986-87 suggests that, in the most recent years, the proportion of national income originating in services has in fact crossed 40 per cent, while the share of agriculture and allied activities has shrunk to 33 per cent.
- 2 See Sudha Deshpande and L. K. Deshpande, 'Census of 1981 and the Structure of Employment', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 1, 1985, Table 1.
- 3 See Colin Clark, *The Conditions of Economic Progress*, Chapter X, Table 1.
- 4 For a discussion, see V. M. Dandekar, 'Agriculture, Employment and Poverty', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 20-27 1986, p. A-94.

JAYATI GHOSH*

Intersectoral Terms of Trade, Agricultural Growth and the Pattern of Demand

The movement of intersectoral terms of trade in India is generally regarded as an issue of crucial importance in affecting patterns of growth and income distribution both in agriculture and in industry. While there is substantial (and often acrimonious) debate on the determinants of agriculture-industry terms of trade as well as their precise impact on economic welfare and the growth process, the significance of such movements tends to be taken for granted by all protagonists. In this paper a slightly different position is taken, in which intersectoral terms of trade are assigned a less important role in determining economic processes. Some of the arguments can be starkly presented as follows. In general the government in India has little power in determining such terms of trade, which emerge not because of the differential *lobbying* power of particular classes but because of the workings of political economic variables such as labour productivity in industry, the real wage and industrial mark-up and import prices. This view contests both 'urban bias' and 'rich farmer lobby' sets of theories. Secondly, it is argued that terms of trade movements (trends) in themselves have not affected either the real incomes of the rural poor or rates of agricultural investment and growth. Thirdly, it is suggested that the causes of industrial growth or stagnation are not to be found in such terms of trade movements, although the latter may affect the pattern of industrial demand and therefore the allocation of investment.

These arguments and others are elaborated below. The first section describes the movement of agriculture-industry terms of trade since the early 1950s and isolates three major phases. Various explanations are considered, and a detailed consideration is made of the factors affecting terms of trade in the latest phase. In the second section the question of the impact on agriculture is taken up, in terms of how the rural poor as well as cultivators who are net sellers are affected. The

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observed effects on agricultural investment are discussed, and some speculation on the role of price incentives in agriculture is indulged in. The final section considers the impact on industrial demand, profitability and overall activity. Although the first section describes the movement of terms of trade since the early 1950s, in the subsequent sections the focus is on the latest phase since the mid-1970s.

MOVEMENTS IN INTERSECTORAL TERMS OF TRADE

Table 1. Barter Terms of Trade P_a/P_i (1970-71=100)

Year	Tyagi Index	Index Based on GOP Deflators
1960-61	79.1	78.8
1961-62	80.6	80.6
1962-63	79.6	82.3
1963-64	72.9	88.0
1964-65	94.0	95.5
1965-66	102.9	102.9
1966-67	112.9	112.5
1967-68	115.6	114.9
1968-69	105.1	108.2
1969-70	101.8	106.1
1970-71	100.0	100.0
1971-72	97.5	97.4
1972-73	103.5	10.8
1973-74	109.6	120.7
1974-75	99.9	105.4
1975-76	84.6	84.4
1976-77	90.7	91.5
1977-78	90.8	89.9
1978-79	85.4	84.9
1979-80	88.6	88.0
1980-81	87.3	88.4
1981-82	82.9	86.4
1982-83	84.7	86.7
1983-84	86.1	89.8
1984-85	—	85.0

Source: D S Tyagi, 'Domestic Terms of Trade and Their Effect on Supply and Demand for the Agricultural Sector', *Review of Agriculture, Economic and Political Weekly*, March 1987, and CSO National Accounts Statistics, various issues.

Table 1 displays two sets of indices of agriculture-industry terms of trade. The index based on GOP price deflators simply compares the

movement of overall agricultural prices to overall industrial prices. The Tyagi Index is possibly more accurate, reflecting the ratios of prices received for commodities sold by agriculture to the prices paid for commodities purchased by agriculture. Nonetheless the two indices broadly tend to move together. Three main sub-periods, or phases, are easily identifiable: the first, 1952-53 to 1963-64, when terms of trade tended to move against agriculture, the second, 1964-65 to 1973-74, when agricultural prices rose faster and terms of trade accordingly swung in favour of agriculture, and finally, the most recent phase, 1974-75 to 1984-85 when the tendency has clearly been for terms of trade to move against agriculture once again.¹

This series does not give an idea of the income terms of trade (barter terms of trade multiplied by marketed surplus). But the increase in marketed surplus for the entire period after 1960-61 suggests that income terms of trade have generally been favourable, and certainly have moved less adversely against the agricultural sector in the more recent period. Thamarajakshi² found that the elasticity of marketed surplus with respect to output was around 1.46 for the period 1960-61 to 1973-74, and from the mid-60s to the mid-70s, the income terms of trade increased by 51 per cent more than the barter terms of trade. Given that middle farmers (holding 4-10 hectares) tend to sell around 35 per cent of their output while large farmers (more than 10 hectares) market more than 55 per cent of their produce,³ it would be reasonable to expect that output increases in the 1970s, which have been concentrated in these size groups, would also imply increases in marketed surplus. This must have operated to mitigate the adverse effects of falling barter terms of trade facing surplus cultivators (net sellers of agricultural products).

What explains these shifting trends in intersectoral terms of trade? Most explanations hinge on the role of the State in fixing prices, thus suggesting a political determination. Early statements of an 'urban bias' of the State by Lipton, have been implicitly accepted and reiterated by Kahlon and Tyagi⁴ and Swamy and Gulati⁵ among others. They suggest that the overall trend of prices has been unfavourable for the agricultural sector, barring a brief period when terms of trade were more conducive to agricultural growth. Particularly since the peak of the early 1970s, they argue that relative price conditions have been continually and progressively adverse, implying the worsening economic status of the rural population in general and creating disincentives for investment in agriculture.

Conversely, Mitra⁶ argued that the terms of trade movement in favour of agriculture from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s was a result of government operations in the foodgrains market and price setting by the APC, which were themselves largely influenced by the political lobbying power of the rich farmer class. Chakravarty⁷ also suggested that the government policy of price support matched by buffer stocks operations had operated to increase the prices of certain agricultural commodities faster than the overall price level.

There is no doubt that government operations in the foodgrains and other crops markets have a crucial impact in setting such prices.⁸ Thus government policies of price support (whereby the APC advocates crop

Table 2 *Prices, Terms of Trade, and Mark-up and Unit Labour Costs in Manufacturing Industry*

	Index of					
	Indus- trial Price Deflator	Agri Price Deflator	P_1/P_a	Indus- trial Mark-up (%)	Unit Labour Costs Pa (%)	Share of Wages in Value Added (%)
	(1970-71=100)					
1960-61	64	50	127	14.43		49.3
61-62	64	51	124	14.67		48.2
62-63	65	54	122	14.69		48.7
63-64	70	61	114	14.72		48.2
64-65	71	68	105	14.13		49.5
65-66	75	77	97	13.67		50.7
66-67	83	93	89	13.08		51.2
67-68	87	100	87	12.08		53.8
68-69	87	97	92	11.27		55.6
69-70	89	100	94	13.49		49.4
70-71	100	100	100	12.08	13.2	52.3
71-72	107	104	103	10.47	—	56.0
72-73	114	123	93	—	—	59.5
73-74	129	156	83	12.01	11.3	53.1
74-75	166	175	95	12.40	11.8	50.1
75-76	172	145	119	10.54	14.5	53.7
76-77	175	160	109	11.54	12.3	49.4
77-78	181	163	111	10.50	12.8	52.3
78-79	188	159	118	11.35	13.2	49.7
79-80	219	193	114	11.04	12.5	49.8
80-81	246	218	113	10.48	11.8	49.8
81-82	271	229	118	10.74	11.2	46.8
82-83	285	247	115	9.70	11.1	48.5
83-84	306	274	111	10.24	10.8	48.6
84-85	327	278	118	10.46	11.5	48.4

Note Industrial mark-up = (gross value added—compensation of employees) – gross value of output, all current prices Unit labour costs – Pa = compensation of employees – gross value of output – agriculture price deflator

Source Calculated from CSO National Accounts Statistics, various issues

prices which cover the previous year's total cost, i.e. cost C which includes the imputed value of land and family labour) and the building up of a buffer stock have tended to ensure that prices of agricultural output keep rising over time. Since 1960-61 there is evidence of a ratchet effect in agricultural output prices: the index has fallen only twice in this period, and only once has it dropped substantially (1975-76, following upon an exceptionally good harvest year). However, this process only serves to determine the absolute level of agricultural prices, not the intersectoral terms of trade. The latter depends on the response of classes in the industrial sector to this rise in agricultural prices. If workers are able to maintain real wages and capitalists respond to rising input costs by raising prices in order to sustain work-ups, then, in the absence of productivity changes, increasing agricultural prices will not lead to shifting terms of trade but simply to inflation overall.⁹ Mitra¹⁰ suggested that the shift in terms of trade in favour of agriculture leads to both falling real wages and a profit squeeze in industry, and he attributed the industrial stagnation post-1964-65 to this combination of phenomena. However, it is apparent from Figure 1 that real wages in industry did not fall after 1964-65, and have registered some slight increases since the 1970s. Similarly, column 5 of Table 2 indicates that, while there appears to be a secular tendency for recorded mark-ups (as gleaned from National Accounts data) to decline from 1960-61 onwards, this does not seem to be related to terms of trade movements. The period 1960-61 to 1973-74 as well as the subsequent period show similar trend declines in the mark-up, even though terms of trade moved in favour of agriculture in the former period and against agriculture in the subsequent period.

It has been suggested¹¹ that the behaviour of intersectoral terms of trade in the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s can be explained by the behaviour of unit costs, which are in turn affected by productivity changes. Rising agricultural prices tend to affect both raw material costs and wage costs (if real wages are maintained constant) for industrial capitalists. These can be sustained with a constant mark-up either if industrial prices are raised accordingly or if productivity changes in industry allow the terms of trade to shift in favour of agriculture. Similarly a movement of terms of trade against agriculture, once again in a context of constant oligopolistic mark-up over prime cost, could reflect either changes in the wage-productivity relationship which affect unit labour costs, or an increase in other non-agricultural unit costs (such as, for example, the cost of imported inputs).

This argument obviously rests on the assumption of industrial price determination based on a mark-up over prime costs. If so, industrial prices can be expressed as follows

$$P_1 = (1 + m) [a_1 P_a + a_2 P_1 + a_3 P_g + 1w]$$

where

$$P_1 = \text{price of industrial goods}$$

P_a	=	price of agricultural goods
P_g	=	prices of imported inputs and administered price (both under government discretion)
m	=	mark-up
$a_{1,2,3}$	=	input coefficients of agricultural, industrial and imported goods respectively
l	=	labour input per unit output
w	=	wage rate

Thus the terms of trade can be expressed as

$$P_1/P_a = (1+m) [a_1 + a_2 P_1/P_a + a_3 P_g/P_a + l w/P_a]$$

With this in mind it is possible to examine more closely the most recent period of terms of trade moving in favour of industry, i.e., 1974-75 to 1984-85. It is evident that such improving intersectoral terms of trade for the industrial sector have not been marked by increasing mark-ups—rather, as shown in Table 2, mark-ups have continued their secular decline.¹² Nor have unit real wage costs (lw/P_a) increased over this period—instead, they appear to have fallen from 1975-76 onwards (Table 2). However, the share of wages in value-added has followed a more predictable pattern. Chakravarty¹³ had established that, with constant real wages, the product wage varies with the relative price of wage goods (agricultural goods) in terms of manufactures. This suggests that, in the absence of productivity changes, unfavourable terms of trade for industry would be associated with a rising share of wages in value-added, and favourable movements of terms of trade for industry with a falling share. This is broadly supported by Table 2.

Since neither the behaviour of mark-up nor that of unit wage costs can explain the rise in industrial prices, it is necessary to look at other elements of cost. The answer would appear to lie in the substantial increase in import prices and administered prices/indirect taxes since the mid-1970s. The story could be as follows. The first oil price shock of 1973-74 had a major impact on industrial costs in the following year, leading to an increase in industrial prices of 27 per cent in 1974-75. This was followed by an excellent harvest year, 1975-76, in which agricultural prices fell absolutely by 17 per cent. This combination explains the dramatic turnaround in intersectoral terms of trade in the two-year period 1973-74 to 1975-76. Subsequently, intersectoral terms of trade have remained around this level, i.e., continued to be adverse for agriculture, largely because of the continuous de facto devaluations of the rupee which have had a relatively greater impact on industrial costs.

The observed rises in administered prices as well as the growing incidence of indirect taxes (which fall entirely on the agricultural sector) have also operated to keep industrial prices increasing. But it does not follow that the increases in administered prices have meant

Table 3 *Mark-up, Real Wages and Employment in the Public Sector
1970-71 to 1984-85*

Year	Mark-up in Public Sector %		Total Public Sector Index of	
	Departmental Enterprises* (mainly Railways)	Non-Depart- mental Non- Financial Enterprises**	Emoluments per Employee	Total Emplo- yment
			(1970-71 = 100)	
1970-71	21.67	7.11	100	100
1971-72	21.72	6.72	105	106
1972-73	19.33	6.35	96	141
1973-74	15.03	5.60	80	204
1974-75	14.90	6.59	82	217
1975-76	15.08	6.98	94	228
1976-77	21.14	7.54	102	239
1977-78	23.31	6.77	106	248
1978-79	21.20	7.04	114	258
1979-80	19.18	7.63	120	269
1980-81	14.29	6.56	123	279
1981-82	14.53	7.90	123	294
1982-83	15.17	9.65	128	307
1983-84	13.59	9.68	136	314
1984-85	14.06	9.67	142	319

Notes * [Profits + Interest] – Total Expenditure

** Operating Surplus – Gross Value of Output.

Source Calculated from CSO National Accounts Statistics, various issues.

increases in public sector mark-ups. The data in Table 3 show no such tendency in terms of a systematic trend.¹⁴ What is apparent is a dramatic increase in the total public sector wage bill. The increase in employment reflects the substantial increases in government outlays on defence and public administration. Real wages in this sector have grown faster than anywhere else in the Indian economy: both this process and the growing levels of public sector employment may be related to the political need to appease the urban middle classes.

THE IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

It is obvious that different classes in the rural sector will be affected variously by movements in agricultural prices, according to whether they are net buyers or net sellers of agricultural products. Furthermore, middle farmers who are net sellers at the margin will be affected more

than larger farmers with greater surplus output. Despite Tyagi¹⁵ it is now widely accepted that substantial sections of the rural poor are net buyers even of foodgrains and thus are adversely affected by rises in price. Recent work has confirmed that rural poverty ratios increase with movements in foodgrain prices, and are especially affected by sharp rises in the latter (e.g. Gaiha, 1988, forthcoming).

Mitra¹⁶ suggested that movements in intersectoral terms of trade in favour of agriculture have adverse effects on the rural poor and marginal farmers, i.e. net buyers. This has been supported by de Janvry and Subbarao¹⁷. Actually, however, terms of trade movements as such are not particularly relevant in determining the income and welfare of rural labourers and marginal farmers. What is relevant is the relationship between money wage income and foodgrain prices. Specifically, real income of such workers, in terms of foodgrain prices, can be stated as

$$\frac{\text{Money wage rate} \times \text{Days employed}}{\text{Foodgrain prices}}$$

It is thus immediately obvious that terms of trade movements can be associated with all directions of movement in agricultural workers' real incomes. Thus, if the increase in foodgrain prices is accompanied by proportionate or greater increases in employment and/or rises in money

Table 4. Rates of Growth of Agricultural Output (% per annum)

		Triennium ending		
		1955-56 to 1963-64	1963-64 to 1975-76	1975-76 to 1983-84
<hr/>				
Foodgrains				
Area	0 92	0 52	0 36	
Production	1.90	2 44	3 13	
Yield	0 61	1 58	2 70	
Non-foodgrains				
Area	2 28	0 61	0 57	
Production	3 34	2 42	2 56	
Yield	0.66	1 30	1 32	
All Crops				
Area	1 15	0 54	0 43	
Production	2 36	2 44	2 95	
Yield	0 65	1 49	2 25	

Source: D.S. Tyagi, 'Domestic Terms of Trade and Their Effect on Supply and Demand for the Agricultural Sector', *Economic and Political Weekly, Review of Agriculture*, March 1987, Table 5

wages, there could be an increase in real wage incomes. Conversely, a movement of terms of trade against agriculture need not imply a relative betterment of the position of net buyers of foodgrain. Indeed, if such a movement leads to declines in wage employment levels, and if increasing costs make farmers more resistant to demands for increasing wages, there is likely to be no improvement in overall wage incomes in the rural areas. Thus the question of how agricultural prices affect the rural poor cannot be separated from the behaviour of overall output and employment in agriculture as well as the ability of workers to bargain for increases in money wages.

What of cultivators who are net sellers of agricultural produce? Obviously the net barter terms of trade should have an impact on their real incomes, which will also be affected by output and marketed surplus. It is worthwhile considering the background of overall agricultural output growth. Table 4 presents annual rates of growth in agriculture for three sub-periods roughly corresponding to the broad shifts in terms of trade.

*Table 5 Weather-Adjusted Growth Rates in Foodgrain Production
1960-61 to 1984-85*

<i>States</i>	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81
	<i>to</i> 1969-70	<i>to</i> 1979-80	<i>to</i> 1984-85
AP	0.93	3.61	0.14
Assam	2.91	0.80	2.09
Bihar	2.32	0.29	2.68
Gujarat	4.56	-1.71	4.65
Haryana	6.25	2.96	5.0
HP	5.27	0.60	-5.21
J&K	6.44	2.46	-3.43
Karnataka	4.17	2.10	3.26
Kerala	2.90	-0.74	-1.61
MP	-0.16	-1.42	4.62
Maharashtra	0.23	9.36	-0.23
Orissa	2.64	1.43	2.98
Punjab	9.70	5.59	7.70
Rajasthan	-0.85	-2.37	5.68
TN	0.87	0.00	-0.15
UP	4.21	2.89	4.62
WB	1.62	1.15	4.18
All-India	2.73	2.02	4.72

Source S Mahendradev, 'Growth and Instability in Foodgrains Production: An Inter-State Analysis', *Economic and Political Weekly, Review of Agriculture*, September 1987, Table 3.

There appears to be no significant relationship between production growth rates and trend movements in the terms of trade. This confirms estimates of the response of aggregate farm output to lagged terms of trade, which suggest relatively low supply elasticities with respect to price, especially when compared to the elasticity with respect to technology changes.¹⁸ A decadal disaggregation of weather-adjusted growth rates in foodgrain production (presented in Table 5) suggests overall a minor deceleration in the 1970s followed by an acceleration since 1980-81. This pattern is particularly marked in the so-called Green Revolution areas of north-west India. In a number of other states the deceleration has continued into the 1980s, with some states experiencing negative growth rates of foodgrain output.

The combination of output and price factors has operated to increase income inequality between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, in terms of differences in per capita NDP. However, as indicated in Table 6, this tendency is not associated with terms of trade between agriculture and industry as such, but takes the form of a secular decline.

Table 6 *Per Capita NDP in Agriculture and Non-Agriculture, 1970-71 prices*

Years	Agriculture (Rs)	Non-Agriculture (Rs)	Non-Agriculture - Agriculture
1951-53	405.66	593.13	1.46
1954-58	421.95	677.34	1.61
1959-67	401.91	902.55	2.25
1968-75	398.83	1068.97	2.68
1976-83	415.61	1216.78	2.93

Source: V M Dandekar, 'Agriculture, Employment and Poverty', *Economic and Political Weekly, Review of Agriculture*, September 1986.

Although the Agricultural Prices Commission does attempt to maintain output prices over costs, the logs involved may lead to imputed costs exceeding prices in certain years. But Swamy and Gulati¹⁹ argue more strongly that over the 1970s cereal cultivators experienced a substantial erosion in their net incomes because of costs rising faster than output prices. Although their results, presented in Table 7, appear stark at first glance, they should be interpreted with some caution.

Firstly, it is evident from Table 7 that net income from cultivation of a single crop continued to be positive, with only a few exceptions. Since this excludes income from by-products, this suggests that aggregate net

incomes must have been higher. Secondly, while the absolute rupee figures and their changes may appear large, they represent relatively small changes in cost-price ratios. Finally, the cost calculations here are based on cost C, which includes the imputed value of land and family labour. This does reflect the opportunity cost of cultivation, but it should be remembered that in most cases some proportion (or all) of this land and labour income accrues to cultivators, so that their net incomes continue to be positive even when the table suggests that they are negative.

Table 7 *Wheat and Paddy Cultivation: Net Income at 1970-71 prices (Rs. per hectare)*

Year	Wheat				Paddy					
	MP		UP	Assam	Orissa	WB	Assam	Orissa	WB	WB
	Haryana	Punjab								
1970-71	611	299	328	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
71-72	553	197	426	504	256	99	NA	250	165	402
72-73	NA	249	167	248	234	272	473	253	-86	468
73-74	601	291	589	612	404	269	508	221	318	486
74-75	478	287	430	NA	328	196	327	281	818	251
75-76	331	83	59	110	18	232	NA	81	683	108
76-77	-109	NA	124	NA	138	217	178	151	187	292
77-78	27	255	72	NA	-34	191	191	135	250	267
78-79	-46	NA	193	149	-115	215	NA	105	296	80
79-80	NA	NA	175	78	57	99	-2	158	312	NA
80-81	NA	NA	54	126	94	231	NA	176	NA	NA
% of crop to net sown area	26.8	17.3	41.3	30.4						

Source: Dalip S. Swamy and Ashok Gulati, 'From Prosperity to Retrogression: Indian Cultivators During the 1970s', *Economic and Political Weekly, Review of Agriculture*, June 1986, Tables 2 and 4 (calculated using APC data)

These caveats notwithstanding, it is evident from relative price indicators and the data in Table 7 that costs have increased and net incomes from cultivation have declined. It has been argued that the decline in incomes would have been more marked had it not been for increases in agricultural productivity, the benefits of which have been passed on to agriculture via the price mechanism. The state-wise response of cultivators, in terms of changes in cropping intensity and yield per hectare in the face of erosion of the price margin over costs, are described in Table 8. It is evident that in a number of states for

specific crops, declines in profit margins have been countered by increase in yield per hectare and cropping intensity.²⁰

Nor has there been a negative impact on agricultural investment as a result of the terms of trade movement. As Figure 2 indicates, gross domestic capital formation in agriculture has accelerated since 1970-71 and certainly also since 1975-76. D S Tyagi, an economist who has consistently argued for higher product prices for farmers, also admits this. Thus Tyagi states that 'the available data on gross domestic capital formation do not indicate any deceleration tempo of investment in farm machinery has continued unabated even after 1975-76'.²¹

Table 8 Compound Annual Rates of Growth of Relevant Indicators in Agriculture 1970-71 to 1980-81 (% per annum)

States	Crop	Changes In			
		Size of Holdings	Cropping Intensity	Yield per hectare	Price Margin Over Cost
A.P	Paddy	-2.99	+0.27	+4.12	-30.28
Assam	Paddy	-0.78	-0.17	+2.84	-3.54
Bihar	Paddy	-4.38	+0.60	+1.73	-21.42
Gujarat	Groundnut	-1.74	+0.19	+10.7	-31.69
Haryana	Wheat	-0.69	+0.86	+2.48	-28.18
M P	Wheat	-1.58	+0.26	+7.19	-11.33
Maharashtra	Jowar	-3.79	+0.39	+7.54	-9.48
Orissa	Paddy	-1.74	+1.33	+1.21	-10.31
Punjab	Wheat	+2.75	+1.42	+0.58	-17.09
Tamilnadu	Paddy	-3.58	+0.19	+4.10	+2.03
U P	Wheat	-1.39	+0.28	+0.73	-13.82
W B	Paddy	-2.47	+1.08	+3.91	-21.11

Source: Dalip S. Swamy and Ashok Gulati, 'From Prosperity to Retrogression. Indian Cultivators in the 1970s', *Economic and Political Weekly, Review of Agriculture*, June 1986, Table 8

In terms of use of new inputs (high-yielding seeds, fertilisers and pesticides) also, the increased tempo of application appears to have been unaffected by adverse terms of trade movements, as Table 9 elaborates.

Tyagi²² explains this in terms of the inelasticity of input use with respect to output,²³ resulting in high rates of growth of productivity and thus declines in unit costs of production measured at constant input prices. He argues that 'this has neutralised the impact on the farmers' real income of terms of trade remaining adverse to the agricultural sector and consequently neither the investment pattern nor the rate of

growth of agricultural output suffered a 'setback' during this most recent phase.

Table 9. Increase in Use of New Inputs

Year	Area Under HYV (mn hectares)	Fertilisers (mn tonnes)	Pesticides (mn tonnes)
1950-51	-	0.1	2.4
1960-61	4.9	0.3	8.6
1970-71	15.4	2.2	24.3
1980-81	43.1	5.5	45.0
1984-85	56.0	8.4	50.0

Source: Manju Ghodke, 'Big Leap in the Use of Farm Inputs', *Economic Times*, February 5, 1986

Does all this imply that prices are irrelevant for agricultural production and investment, and consequently a preobrazhensky-type strategy can be usefully employed to increase agricultural surpluses in India? Mitra suggests the existence of a backward-bending supply curve and argues that 'it is possible, under certain specified conditions, that increasing the level of farm prices would itself be the greatest deterrent, even if not to increased output, at least to increased marketed surplus'.²⁴ However, empirical studies of Indian agriculture (such as those of Raj Krishna) suggest a positive, if limited, response of farm output and marketed surplus to price. De Janvry and Subbarao argue slightly differently 'while agricultural output can be modestly stimulated through price incentives . . . the social cost of this approach to output growth is excessively high . . . Improving the terms of trade for agriculture decreases the absolute income of the poor and worsens inequality in the distribution of income. The consequence is that either a monetarist approach to increasing agricultural output needs to be accompanied by protective measures for the poor—in particular by food subsidies or income transfers—or a structuralist approach must be pursued to stimulate agricultural output *without reliance on price instruments*' (emphasis added).²⁵

There is no doubt—nor is there likely to be much debate—on the conclusion that given the existing political economy of India, 'technology (research, extension, and the provision of modern inputs) and infrastructure investment (principally irrigation) are the key future shifters of agricultural supply'. What is problematic is the conclusion that these can be successfully applied in the complete absence of a price support programme. In other words, attempts to raise farm output and marketed surplus through increased investments may lead to a fall in output price so substantial as to wipe out income gains for farmers. In such a situation it would be absurd to expect a continued

surge of farm investment if prices are allowed to fall freely. Thus, non-price means of increasing agricultural output need to be accompanied by some cost-based agricultural price support programme if they are to lead to sustained output expansion.

Since the incomes of the rural poor tended to be adversely affected by increases in agricultural output prices (as discussed above) these tendencies have to be mitigated by increases in employment and/or money wages. In such circumstances the implementation of rural employment schemes such as the Food for Work programmes (NREP, RLEGP) become of crucial significance. Policies designed to increase rural employment also tend to improve the relative bargaining position of the rural poor and permit them to bid for increases in money wages. In turn, achieving such increases is more feasible when agricultural output and profits are increasing. None of the above, however, is directly affected by terms of trade movements per se.

The Impact on Industrial Demand and Profitability

There are two major ways in which terms of trade are said to affect industrial growth. The first is through the operation of a wage goods constraint, leading to an increase in the product wage and thus to a squeeze on profitability. This argument has been most cogently made by Chakravarty²⁶ for the period from the early 1960s and 1970s. As suggested in the first section, the data on share of wages in value added in manufacturing industry broadly support his argument. Since the mid-1970s, however, both terms of trade and the product wage would appear to have moved in a direction which suggests that the wage goods constraint is not operative.

The second link of terms of trade with industrial growth is through demand. Mitra²⁷ has forcefully argued that a movement of terms of trade in favour of agriculture leads to an overall decline in demand for industrial goods. This is because real incomes of the rural and urban workers decline and the share of income spent on food increases, thus leading to declines in industrial demand from these classes. The surplus producers in agriculture, whose real income has increased, tend to demand not mass consumption goods but luxury consumer goods and capital goods, thus leading to a change in the pattern of aggregate demand. At the same time the profit squeeze in industry tends to depress overall investment, which is in any case being diverted to the faster growing luxury sectors with high indivisibilities in production requiring relatively large investments. This leads to a syndrome of high capital intensity, large indivisibility, high cost, high price, low demand and low output in industry.

Some difficulties with this argument have been discussed earlier. Real wages in industry do not appear to have fallen over the relevant period, nor was there any deceleration in the output growth in non-durable consumer goods which should have been hit by this tendency. Rather, the deceleration is heavily concentrated in the capital goods

and intermediate goods production—i.e., precisely those areas which were most affected directly and indirectly by the slow-down in public productive investment. The more relevant aspect of Mitra's argument relates to shifts in the pattern of demand, which change the composition of industrial output but do not in themselves necessarily imply industrial stagnation.

Rangarajan,²⁸ using NSS data, has calculated the impact of agricultural output growth and terms of trade on the demand for industrial goods. His study shows that agricultural output growth has a positive impact on the demand for industrial consumption goods. The total effect of terms of trade (taking into account both the rural and urban impact) is found to be negative, but the elasticity is negligible. Improvement in agriculture's terms of trade promotes rural savings but has a significantly negative impact on public savings. In Rangarajan's model, the positive and negative effects of changes in terms of trade tend to cancel out in the aggregate.

Table 10. Rural Consumption Expenditures on Industrial Products 1960-61 to 1973-74 (Per Capita Expenditures at 1964-65 prices)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Bottom 40%</i>	<i>Middle 40%</i>	<i>Top 20%</i>	<i>All groups</i>
1960-61	36	83	287	105
1961-62	37	82	274	102
1963-64	35	73	242	92
1964-65	34	75	225	88
1965-66	32	69	212	83
1966-67	27	59	173	69
1967-68	27	59	156	66
1968-69	28	61	208	77
1969-70	29	66	209	80
1970-71	30	67	195	78
1973-74	32	69	228	86

Source: C. Rangarajan, *Agricultural Growth and Industrial Performance in India*, Washington DC: IFPRI, 1982.

Table 10, from Rangarajan, covers a period of broadly improving terms of trade for agriculture (the Mitra period). Per capita rural consumption expenditure on industrial products (at constant prices) tends to fall or stagnate for the bottom 40 per cent of the rural population. There is also an evident decline for the middle 40 per cent, some proportion of whom would be net sellers of agricultural produce. What is surprising is the fairly marked decline *even* for the top 20 per cent, the category comprising landlords, rich farmers and others who could be presumed to benefit from the terms of trade shift. This is true even when bad harvest years, which would have adversely affected the income terms

of trade, are not taken into consideration. This would indicate that increasing incomes of the rich farmer class are not necessarily spent on a different class of industrial consumption goods (luxury commodities) but may actually be spent on labour services or other such channels which operate to increase the total demand for foodgrains rather than industrial goods. Thus a shift in terms of trade in favour of agriculture need not shift aggregate demand in favour of luxury goods.

Table 11. Share of Food in Total Consumption Expenditure, 1960-61 to 1984-85

<i>Year</i>	<i>% of Total Consumption Expenditure on Food (at current prices)</i>	<i>% of Total Consumption Expenditure on Cereals (at current prices)</i>	<i>Index of per capita Real Cereal Expenditure (1970-71=100) (constant prices)</i>
1960-61	62.1	28.7	92
61-62	62.2	27.1	91
62-63	61.4	25.2	87
63-64	61.8	26.8	88
64-65	62.6	28.4	97
65-66	62.1	27.3	82
66-67	62.9	28.8	83
67-68	66.6	30.7	96
68-69	62.9	29.9	98
69-70	64.8	29.8	98
70-71	63.8	28.8	100
71-72	60.9	27.3	101
72-73	61.4	26.7	94
73-74	64.1	29.1	97
74-75	63.4	30.1	92
75-76	60.8	27.9	105
76-77	58.1	24.2	84
77-78	59.3	24.6	100
78-79	57.7	23.0	99
79-80	55.5	20.4	79
80-81	57.6	22.1	101
81-82	55.9	20.9	96
82-83	53.3	20.4	91
83-84	56.4	22.1	103
84-85	54.1	18.4	95

Source: Calculated from CSO National Accounts Statistics, various issues

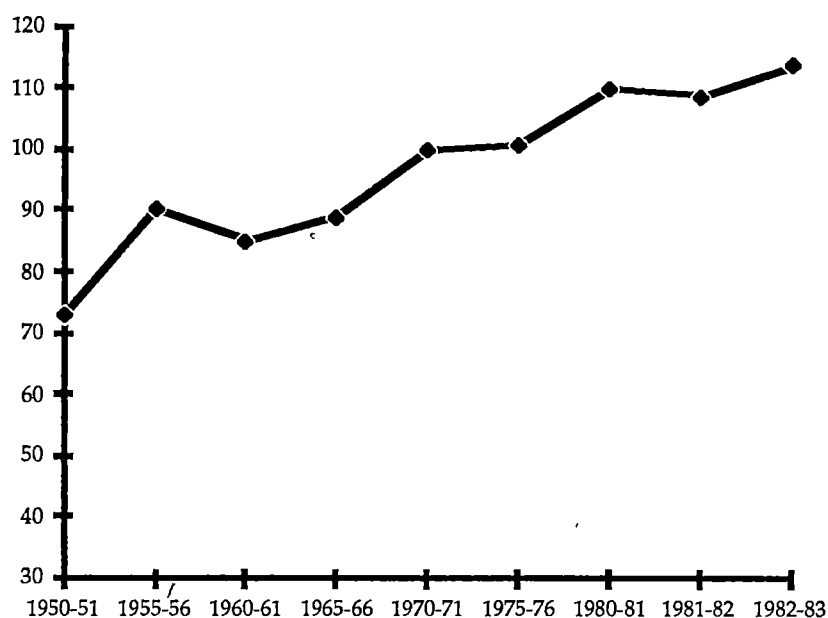
It is much more likely that the reverse terms of trade movement—against agriculture—operates to change the pattern of industrial

demand. It is true that real wage levels have not increased much since the mid-1970s, except in the last few years. But the rapid growth in public sector employment (mainly in the urban services sector, incorporating public administration and defence) has meant that among the chief beneficiaries of this terms of trade movement *within* the economy have been the urban middle and working classes. Demand from these groups is not only less food-intensive, it also tends increasingly to be directed towards durable consumer goods and the more expensive range of textiles. The recent boom in the production/assembly of durable consumption goods, especially luxuries such as televisions, VCRs and passenger vehicles, is a reflection of the growing demand from this section of the economy.

Some confirmation of the first part of this argument can be had from Table 11, which examines the share of food in total consumption expenditure since 1960-61. This share rose slightly (especially in the late 1960s) until 1973-74, and since then has been falling more or less consistently. A similar tendency is evident for the share of cereals in total consumption expenditure. It could be argued that this reflects an Engels Curve phenomenon whereby food becomes less important as overall real incomes increase. However, it is also evident from Table 11 that real per capita expenditure on cereals (at constant prices) has roughly stagnated since 1967-68.²⁹ Thus, unless one makes the heroic assumption that saturation levels of foodgrain consumption were reached in the late 1960s in the Indian economy, one cannot attribute this declining share to an overall Engels shift for the whole population. Rather it represents a shift in income distribution from those for whom foodgrains constitutes the primary element of expenditure, to those groups who are increasingly able to demand luxury industrial consumption items.

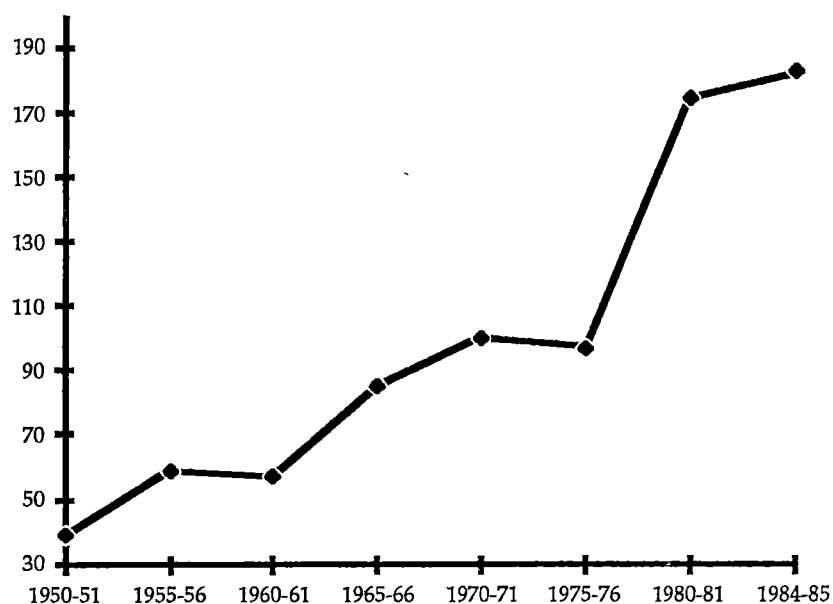
Essentially therefore the recent terms of trade movement against agriculture has meant increases in the real incomes of particular urban groups whose incremental demand is heavily oriented to consumer durables and spending on a variety of services. This in turn affects the pattern of output growth and investment in industry as well as the overall rate of expansion of the services sector. Such a shift in income distribution need not imply industrial stagnation. It is quite possible for a number of industries to grow fairly rapidly based on this combination of public infrastructural investment and urban consumer demand. Whether this is a desired pattern of expansion in an economy where per capita foodgrain consumption stagnates at levels associated with widespread poverty, is of course another matter.

Figure I—Real Wages in Industry (Index 1970-71)



Source Upto 1976-77 from Ruchira Chatterjee, *The Behaviour of Industrial Prices in India 1947-77*, Univ of Cambridge, Ph D thesis, 1985, after 1976-77 from ASI, various issues

Figure II—Gross Domestic Capital Formation (Index 1970-71=100)



Source CSO National Accounts Statistics, various issues

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Much of the empirical data of the late 1970s resolves into a question of the choice of base and end years See R Thamarajakshi, 'Role of Price Incentives in Stimulating Agricultural Production', in D Ensminger (ed), *Food Enough or Starvation for Millions*, Tata Mcgraw Hill, New Delhi, 1977, Ashok Mitra, *Terms of Trade and Class Relations*, Frank Cass, London, 1977, and D S Tyagi, 1979
- 2 Ibid
- 3 See Alain de Janvry and Subbarao, *Agricultural Price Policy and Income Distribution in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986
- 4 A S Kahlon and D S Tyagi, *Agricultural Price Policy in India*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1983
- 5 Dalip S Swamy and Ashok Gulati, 'From Prosperity to Retrogression Indian Cultivators During the 1970s', *Economic and Political Weekly, Review of Agriculture*, June 1986
- 6 Op cit
- 7 Sukhamoy Chakravorthy, 'Some Reflections on the Growth Process in the Indian Economy', *ILR*, reprinted in C Wadhwa (ed), Second Edition, 1974, 'On the Question of the Home Market and Prospects for Economic Growth', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special No , August 1979
- 8 This view has been questioned by Raj Krishna ('Some Aspects of Agricultural Growth, Price Policy and Equity in Developing Countries', Food Research Institute Studies, in press) and Kahlon and Tyagi (op cit), who argue that 'market price has been the leader price and procurement price a reluctant follower', especially since the early 1970s
- 9 Sen and Maynard develop this argument—Sen specifically for the Indian case See Abhijit Sen, *The Agriculture Constraint to Economic Development The Case of India*, Ph D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1981, and Geoffrey Maynard, *Economic Development and the Price Level*, Macmillan, London, 1962
- 10 Op cit
- 11 Sen, op cit
- 12 It could be argued that this decline is a statistical illusion, in that actual profits have been disguised by reporting some proportion of them as elements of cost. However, there may be other reasons for this evident decline, despite relatively lower agricultural prices. Furthermore, the data used (value added — wages / gross value of output) minimise the possibility of such under-estimation of mark-up
- 13 Op cit , 1974
- 14 A slight increase is evident in recent years for non-departmental, non-financial enterprises
- 15 Op cit
- 16 Op cit
- 17 Op cit
- 18 Raj Krishna quoted in ibid , p 31
- 19 Op cit
- 20 It is noteworthy that the only state where cultivators experienced an improvement in price margins over cost, Tamilnadu, was also one which experienced zero rate of growth of foodgrains output in this period. Compare Table 5
- 21 D S Tyagi, 'Domestic Terms of Trade and Their Effect on Supply and Demand for the Agricultural Sector', *Economic and Political Weekly, Review of Agriculture*, March 1987, p A33
- 22 Ibid
- 23 He estimates the relevant elasticities to be 0.56 for wheat, 0.58 for cotton, and 0.86 in the case of paddy
- 24 Op cit
- 25 Op cit , p 93
- 26 Op cit , 1974
- 27 Op cit
- 28 C Rangarajan, *Agricultural Growth and Industrial Performance in India*, IFPRI, Washington D C , 1982, 'Industrial Growth Another Look', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual No , 1982
- 29 This conclusion is similar to that of Dandekar looking at per capita foodgrain consumption in kilograms. See V M Dandekar, 'Agriculture, Employment and Poverty', *Economic and Political Weekly, Review of Agriculture*, Sept 1986

AMAL SANYAL*

*The Fiscal Crisis and the Monetary System***

The following is meant to be a survey of the developments in the monetary and the financial spheres in India since her Independence in 1947. The development has been viewed in the context of India's fiscal crisis. The nature of the fiscal crisis has been stated in the beginning, rather sketchily, only to motivate the survey of the monetary and financial developments¹.

The fiscal difficulties of the Government of India are well known. The features most often commented upon are the rising ratio of budget deficit to total annual budget, the balance of payments difficulty, the rising ratio of the government's consumption expenditure to total outlay, rise in transfers including interest payment, and the continued inability to tax certain kinds of income. The persistence of these difficulties lends itself to a simplistic deduction of a fiscal crisis of the Indian State, which runs as follows. With time the gap between productive capacity and private effective demand increases, leaving the State with the responsibility of providing supplementary effective demand, particularly in the form of public investment, which with a lag might induce larger private investment in the future. The widening gap between capacity and private demand requires the State's supplementary expenditure to increase faster than the growth of the system, while political status quo would permit revenue mobilisation, at the maximum, to grow at the rate at which the system itself is growing. The result is a growing deficit of the government to be covered by a combination of foreign borrowing, domestic borrowing or money creation. The difficulty accentuates depending on the specific mix of these options, resulting in larger interest payments obligation (at home or abroad) and inflation, both aggravating the original problem. Through relative income adjustments against the poor, a temporary correction may be sought by the system, but it will rebound back through

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either a political crisis or a further reduction of private effective demand in relation to capacity.

Keynesian in origin, this simplistic construction provides little insight into the fiscal crisis of the Indian State, if there is one. The Indian public fisc has two basic purposes, different from and much more important than supplementing private effective demand. These two purposes originated from two kinds of weaknesses of the Indian big bourgeoisie at the time of Independence: in terms of resources, material and monetary, and in terms of social and political clout or credibility. Corresponding to the first it was necessary that the State undertakes to build an infrastructure to complement the development of capital, as also build up a financial superstructure that would draw into the mainstream of capitalist circulation all the assets held by other property-owning classes which had not been hitherto monetised. The second weakness implied that if the big bourgeoisie were the sole leader of the new State, it would undermine the credibility of the regime, thus impeding the development of capital. It necessitated the mobilisation of other property-owning classes as allies into a coalition to be led by the big bourgeoisie.

A working coalition between the big bourgeoisie on the one hand, other property owners and the middle classes, urban as well as rural, had already emerged during the Independence movement for the same reason, i.e., to provide credibility of the movement in the eyes of the Indian people. After Independence the bourgeoisie had to continue to rally these classes around itself. This required from the very beginning that the common fisc of the government function as a source of various transfer incomes and compensation to all kinds of property and to the petty bourgeoisie. It also required the erection and elaboration of a country-wide machinery for implementation of such transfers, evaluation of claims, setting up of norms and arbitrating between counter-claims of different claimant groups. This led to the proliferation of a wide network of government departments and offices all over the country, and a rapid rise of government's consumption expenditure. Significantly it also rapidly expanded not only the bureaucracy but a petty bourgeoisie cadre of the government who held strategic positions not so much in decision-making but in implementation. This last group, the creation of political necessity also became essential for the political rule of the coalition to continue, and increased the cost of maintaining the coalition further, not only on account of their salary which of course has always increased faster than the cost of living, but because, to retain this vital section loyal to the political rule the governmental system had to leave enough discretion in their hands regarding implementation. While this has provided petty unaccounted incomes all over the system, it has further increased the social cost of maintaining the political coalition, and provided hospitable infrastructure for large black incomes to be generated.

All in all, thus, the common fisc of the Indian State had two major expenses to manage. One to aid the development of capital by developing physical and financial infrastructure, and the other, to finance the cost of maintaining the coalition, which includes not just favours to the constituents of the coalition but also the cost of the huge structure of governance. In the prevailing situation of limited overall resources, as we will discuss below, the second item has eaten into the resources that could have been used for the first, thus creating only slow development of capital and industrialisation. As a result, the coalition has been growingly maintained by intensifying the burden on the millions outside the coalition, thereby increasing the expenditure on saving the political system from attack from outside—to name, the expenses on police, military, intelligence and legal persecution.

If there is a fiscal crisis of the Indian State, it consists of the fact that the two purposes for which the common fisc stands have become incompatible and irreversibly so. The State has approached a situation where expenditure on the development of capitalism is almost entirely preempted by the expenses of maintaining and saving the coalition. The alliance which was fostered to aid the development of capitalism has transformed itself into a big hurdle to its development. This is the context in which we will survey the development of money, finance and fiscal policy in India in the sections below. The survey is not an exhaustive survey of all developments in these areas, but only deals with the ones that are significant for the political economy of the system.

THE MONETISATION OF THE ECONOMY

Table 1. Monetisation of the Indian Economy

	Rate of growth of	
	M ₁	M ₃
1950-55	2.17	2.45
1955-60	5.82	6.66
1960-65	9.44	7.50
1965-70	9.53	8.22
1970-75	12.53	10.06
1975-80	17.06	19.86

Source. Based on International Financial Statistics, (1971, 1981) computed by V. Kulkarni and S. Miller, 'The Money Supply Process in India', *The Indian Economic Journal*, Vol 34, No 1.

The most remarkable development in the area of money, banking and finance is of course the spectacular monetisation of the economy. The rate of growth of money stock (M₁) shown in Table 1 tells a story of

rapid monetisation. Starting with a rate of 2.17 per cent in the five years 1950-55, the annual rate of growth of M_1 has increased monotonically to 17.06 per cent in 1975-80 and the current annual growth rate is around 19 per cent. The growth of money stock including time deposits (M_3) has also been spectacular. Since the seventies M_3 has been generally growing faster than M_1 .

Of this observed fact of the growth of money stock, two different aspects need separate discussion: one, monetisation in the sense of extending the cash nexus into the areas of the economy which had very little or no use for cash so far; two, within the organised part of the economy, monetisation was an attempt to draw such savings and assets of the well-to-do sections into the mainstream of capitalist circulation, as had so far stayed out of it. Somewhat loosely one can refer to these two processes as the monetisation of income and the monetisation of assets respectively. We will discuss the two processes one after another.

Monetisation: The First Aspect

The areas of the national economy which used very little money must have been fairly large at the time of Independence. Even as late as 1960, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India was on record estimating it around 35 per cent of the national economy.² Over the last forty years this proportion has steadily declined, bringing larger parts of the economy into the cash nexus. A feature of this development is that despite a growing part of the national income coming under the purview of money use, the average rate of growth of money stock (M_1) over the last forty years does not turn out to differ in a statistically significant sense from the average growth rate of the GNP at current prices, even though in the short run these rates of growth have been generally different. This reported long-run behaviour has led to a generally accepted conclusion that the long-run income-elasticity of demand for money in India is unity. More recent works have tried to decompose this unitary elasticity as the resultant effect of differential growth of different sections of the economy with different income elasticities, for example the rural-urban dichotomy, or the agricultural and industrial dichotomy have often been used.³ From the viewpoint of political economy it seems more instructive to decompose the growth of demand for money somewhat differently. We may do this by noting that over a long period when the use of money stock is growingly stretched over larger areas of the national economy, it would seem that the demand for money should grow faster than nominal income. Thus if the supply of money grows only as fast as real income is growing, there will be a tendency for the price level to fall. I would suggest that this is an important consequence of monetisation in the first sense in India which has cushioned the economy against extreme price rise even in situations of very adverse shocks like in 1965-67 or in 1973. The much

discussed resilience of the Indian economy against positive monetary shocks partly owes itself to this factor

Table 2. Currency Deposit Ratio during 1951 to 1956

	<i>Currency</i> (in Rs crore)	<i>Dd liabilities</i> (in Rs crore)	<i>Cur. X 100</i> <i>dep</i>
1951-52	1250	791	158 03
1952-53	1228	799	153 69
1953-54	1288	817	157 65
1954-55	1377	908	151 65
1955-56	1571	1005	156 32

Source A Vasudevan, 'The Ratio of Currency to Demand Deposits in India: 1951-52 to 1974-75', *RBI Bulletin*, April-May 1977

The rapid rise in the velocity of circulation because of structural changes in the already monetised sectors has generally masked this tendency from being actually observed, producing an impression of a long-run unitary elasticity of money demand. During the early years until 1955-56, when the currency-deposit ratio was virtually stagnant (see Table 2) and the banking multiplier was in fact falling, it may be fair to assume that no significant rise in velocity in the monetised sector had yet occurred. During this period money supply rose by 11 per cent and real output at constant 1970-71 prices rose by 15.5 per cent, while the index of wholesale prices registered a fall of about 9 per cent (which is twice the difference between the growth rates of real output and money stock). This portrays the influence of growing monetisation. Extension of the use of money over the non-monetary sector naturally has a diminishing pace over time asymptotically approaching zero; on the other hand the escalation of the velocity of circulation may prove to be a continuing phenomenon. Thus the resilience on the price front which our economy inherited as the legacy of vast tracts of a non-monetised sphere is fast running out if not dried up already.

While the Reserve Bank of India went ahead aggressively for the monetisation of assets and savings of the well-to-do sections, it did very little active work for monetisation of the first kind. The State itself and property owners of all shades were active in this area and the people in the hitherto non-mentioned sectors had to actively seek refuge in the money-using sector. The Indian State and the bourgeoisie systematically continued a programme of attaching all kinds of common and communal property—forests, pastures, fisheries, mines and rivers. This is an important aspect of the accumulation of resources by the Indian rich and the Indian State. After Independence a significant amount of common property of various minority groups mostly residing in the protected princely states came up for grabbing. The Indian Forests

Act of 1927 that had skipped the native kingdoms and tribal chiefdoms was now applied meticulously and thoroughly in these areas too, for increasing the resources of the State, private industry and others in the political coalition. As a result it rapidly swelled the mass of people with no means of livelihood whatsoever. The common property had served to provide food, fuel and materials for building shelter to millions of people until Independence.

After Independence, gradually deprived of the basic needs of life they had to seek alternative livelihood either through gainful employment or charity or crime but whatever the specific form of this livelihood it had to be now within the ambit of the monetary economy.⁴ Thus monetisation of the first kind has proceeded over the last forty years through a process of coercion, in which the monetary authority had little active role to play. Reaching money to the remote countryside for which the aggressive branch expansion scheme of the nationalised commercial banks is often credited, as we will see below, had the second kind of monetisation as its purpose, namely to monetise such private wealth and assets as remained shy of the process of capitalist circulation.

One fall-out of the first kind of monetisation, extremely important for Indian politics, is the creation of a large unorganised mass of people around the so-called poverty line, swelled only by the landless people falling out of traditionally settled agricultural areas. The resource transfer to the State and private industry from common property may be over, and thus the price-depressing effect of continuing monetisation may also be over some day, but this mass of people will continue to serve an important function for the economic system. Because of their unorganised nature, their real earnings can be most easily squeezed in the face of inflation. These are the people who serve in the massive construction industry, as casual labour in the railways, ports and other public sector and private sector units, in retail shops all over the country, as domestic help and finally in all small-scale industrial units. Their unorganised nature prevents any inflation indexation either institutionalised or through collective bargaining. This mass of unorganised people will continue to provide spectacular cushioning of inflation, so that economic policy and its outcome in terms of prices will continue to puzzle the macro-economist.⁵

Monetisation The Second Aspect

We may now turn to the second aspect of monetisation. The promotion of development required long-term funds for the government as also for private industry. The response of the system to this problem will be discussed in a separate section. In addition to the extreme paucity of these funds, a major pre-occupation of the State was to augment the supply of short-term working funds not only for industry, but also for trade, commerce, agriculture and the government. To the traditional problem of paucity of working funds in the busy season was now added

the continuous short-fall of working funds because of rapid increase in particularly construction and transport immediately after Independence. The commercial banks were responding to this situation by monetising the public debt which the new government inherited. The Reserve Bank of India, nationalised on January 1, 1949, was duly concerned about the implication of this for the State's finances, and took a few early measures. The monetisation of public debt was curbed by the RBI's new open market and price support policies. At the same time, to make the supply of money more elastic to the needs of business, the RBI introduced a scheme for the development of a market for bills in 1952. Even though both Indian and foreign commercial banks discounted bills of established customers, there was no market for further dealing in these bills, and the commercial banks simply held these papers till maturity. Also rediscounting bills was perhaps looked upon as a sign of weakness and the domestic banks preferred to borrow from the Imperial Bank against government securities rather than rediscount bills. The RBI used some provisions of the RBI Act to provide for acceptance of time bills arising out of *bonafide* commercial transactions for making advances to banks, and to popularise the rediscounting of such bills offered to make advances at half a per cent less than the prevailing rate and bear half the cost of stamp duty.

Table 3· Early Progress of the Bill Market Scheme (in Rs Crores)

Year	Advance against Govt securities	Advance against Usance Bill	Total
1952	164 (67)	82 (33)	246
1953	130 (66)	66 (34)	196
1954	189 (56)	147 (44)	336
1956	91 (40)	135 (60)	226

Table 3 clearly shows that advance against usance bills was replacing that against government securities, thus curbing the monetisation of public debt. However the development of a market for sound self-liquidating bills proved entirely illusory. The failure of this attempt provides an interesting insight into the Indian monetary system. If we examine the progress of the bill scheme in the 50s and 60s, it will appear that the bill which arose out of this scheme was not a real negotiable instrument, it was merely a bank advance which was converted by the banks to suit the provisions of section 17 (4)C of the RBI Act. The RBI really speaking was accepting these bills as security against its advance. In fact the scheme permitted banks whenever in need of liquidity to convert a part of their advances, whether overdraft or cash credit into usance bills maturing within 90 days in connivance with borrowers, and use them to get advance from the RBI. Dissatisfied

with the progress of the scheme, the RBI introduced in November 1970 a second or the New Bill Scheme where bills were required to be genuine trade bills evidencing sale and/or despatch of goods and thus self-liquidating in character. Also the RBI actually rediscounted these bills. However the new scheme is not too popular with the banks, and it has not been able to displace the collateral loan system (cash credit and overdraft) in any perceptible amount. Table 4 shows the relative position of collateral loans and inland bills discounted or purchased, it does not tell a success story.

Table 4: Collateral Loans Vs Bills (Rs Crores)

<i>Year</i>	1971	1976	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Loans	3832	9479	24073	28788	34406	40222	47087
Inland bills purchased or discounted	765	1852	2283	2277	3002	3137	3521

Source. RBI, *Report on currency and Finance*, Vol II, 1984-85

In fact the New Bill Scheme created an irritant for the RBI in that the banks started using the rediscounting facility to undermine the control of RBI on money supply. During 1973-75 when the RBI tried to tighten bank credit as an anti-inflationary measure, the bills rediscounted by the banks increased from a paltry Rs 7 crore in 1972-73 to Rs 193 crore in 1974-75, and the RBI had to put restrictions on rediscounting. The bill marked example is typical of an interesting feature of the Indian system. Development of a market in self-liquidation usance bills would have minimised the injection of liquidity by the central bank for short-term credit, and would have gone a long way in stabilising the Indian financial system and the government's fiscal problem. But what was not realised in this experiment is that the institutions do not succeed unless they match the convenience of the classes for whom they are meant. The Indian borrower has steadfastly opposed the discipline of a self-liquidating time-bound instrument, and has shown its preference for collateral loans with its provision of flexible limits, easy drawability, rolling over facility and perhaps the possibility of fraudulent multiple hypothecation. The commercial banks can discount only such papers as are brought to them, and the ultimate supplier of bills has to be the credit seeker. In their tacit opposition to the disciplining by bills, the small and large borrowers have been alike. We will see below that the government is currently passing through a similar misadventure of trying to promote a healthy primary issues market for the benefit of the corporate sector. The failure of these experiments are pre-destined because of their incompatibility with the underlying social interests.

The result so far as the bill market goes has been that the system has failed to integrate the organised sector's supply of credit with the native instruments of credit which circulate alongside. The Indian borrower has shown remarkable reluctance to transform one into the other and kept the two systems almost separate. Thus their borrowing from the organised system has inevitably led to injection of Central Bank liquidity, circulating alongside and not cancelling native papers of various kinds. The scale of the circulating instruments outside the organised sector is enormous and its extent can be gauged from the fact that some of our very large activities in the organised sector like production and export of gems and jewellery, the export of readymade garments and the large private sector activity of land development and housing and the production of films do not ever approach our organised banking sector for finances.⁶

Since the traditional instruments have not been weeded out and cannot be, one perennial problem of the Indian monetary system is that the estimates of liquidity in the system by monetary authorities based on the money stocks always understates it, particularly in inflationary periods, when the RBI tries to curb the liquidity of the system. In such periods it is mainly the liquidity of the government and the public sector which gets curbed without much tangible impact on the liquidity in the unorganised sector. The latter have a menacing presence during inflation through speculative activities, and long before there is any significant impact on speculation, recessionary tendency precipitated by the cut in public sector activities starts setting in.

The prevalence of the collateral loans on the other hand menaces the banking scene. It engages a substantial part of the attention of the RBI in devising methods of curbing what it considers unsocial banking activities. The Differential Interest Rates, Credit Authorisation Scheme or devising complicated formulas for liquidity to be maintained by the commercial banks are attempts by a monetary authority caught in the objective situation where a large part of the short-term credit is for holding stocks and not for financing goods in transit.

The prevalence of collateral loans in the organised sector together with a large mass of instruments in the unorganised sector implies something intriguing. It implies that mostly genuine self-liquidating bills are handled by the unorganised sector, and mostly when the credit seeker is uncertain about the time of liquidation he comes to the organised sector. In the days of private banking controlled by large houses,⁷ the controlling firms used bank credit only for propositions involving uncertain liquidation date, while self-liquidating genuine trade bills used to be discounted outside the banking sector. Much the same situation seems to prevail today after many years of nationalisation, and the insight it provides into the political system should not be missed.

Finally, while the private sector has wide access to the vast unorganised credit market, the government and the public sector does

not. The fiscal difficulties would be further aggravated if it were to compete with private borrowers in the organised credit market, by bidding up the price of credit. Thus the government has to raise short-term funds from the commercial banks through statutory compulsions of requiring banks to keep a stipulated part of their total deposits in government and other approved securities. The arrangement certainly does not make for better profitability of banks, nor does it work for efficiency in government department, since it artificially reduces their cost of borrowing. Banks on the other hand blame their poor profitability on the system of captive lending.

NATIONALISATION OF COMMERCIAL BANKS

Table 5 Per Capita Emoluments of Public Sector employees in relation to all India consumer Price index (1960 = 100) 1970-84

Year	Per capita emolument (Rs)	Consumer Price Index
1970-71	5470	184
1971-72	5920	190
1972-73	5805	202
1973-74	5573	236
1974-75	7402	304
1975-76	8983	321
1976-77	8940	296
1977-78	10048	321
1978-79	11201	329
1979-80	12468	350
1980-81	14239	390
1981-82	16158	441
1982-83	18029	475
1983-84	21677	532

Source. Economic Survey 1985-86

By the end of the sixties, the evolution of the Indian system produced interesting features. Political equations based on the relations of classes and the various strata as prevailed at the time of Independence had started becoming obsolete, because the very process of economic change had significantly altered the interests of the well-to-do classes, and several new strata emerged in the society. A large class of land owning farmers had emerged in the country with interest and outlook radically different from the old land-owning class. The continuous growth of the functions of the government and the development of the public sector (both industry as also the financial sector) resulted in the growth of a middle rank of government employees often with strategic position in

local levels of implementation. Their income has grown faster than the cost of living since the end of the seventies, like that of the upper strata of employees in the private sector (see Table 5). Together they constituted an educated, politically articulated upward-looking large petty bourgeoisie, the like of which did not exist earlier. Finally petty production, retailing and commerce in small towns and semi-urban centres had proliferated, often asserting themselves against the remains of old local hierarchies.

Due to inequality of salary distribution it is safe to assume that the better-paid sections saw a much larger improvement than shown by this table. Together, all these developments were creating tensions in the society. In the rural areas the local hierarchies had been gradually dissolving or developing entirely different outlooks and this created a kind of vacuum not yet filled up by a new system of hierarchy. In the urban areas, the growth of the middle classes had made them assertive and ambitious, and the enlightened understanding that there was not too much room for the growth and reproduction of their class in the given economic conditions, made them anxious and restive. These tensions were clearly showing in the spate of organised trade union movement in the public and the private sectors, food movements in several parts of the country led by the urban middle classes throughout 1966, and emergence of both new and breakaway political parties all over the country before the general election in 1967, and finally a vertical split in the Indian National Congress. While the political system stabilised over a few years by working out new equations between the different interests, it was clear that a set of new economic institutions were necessary to contain the new interests.

A large number of new institutions and measures emerged, like institutionalising a price support for agriculture, creating a package of benefits for the upcoming export houses, etc., into which we need not go here, apart from noticing that the transfer expenditure of the government, an important element in the government's fiscal difficulty, significantly increased in its attempt to contain the new developments. It also became necessary to provide working funds to the new strata—the agriculturists, the upcoming businessman, the new export-oriented units and the second generation of the urban middle-classes who often sought self-employment. At the same time it was realised that it is much easier to mobilise the savings of the new farmers and the new middle classes who were both sociologically and in terms of economic outlook a different generation of people compared to the earlier generation of the well-to-do.

The nationalisation of the scheduled commercial banks was a most timely measure (i) to reach into the remote areas of the country to mobilise the savings of these new upcoming strata, (ii) to develop an institution which will advance short-term funds to the same strata in the most politically expedient form. The brief features of nationalisation are: Fourteen major scheduled commercial banks were

nationalised in July 1969, and six more in 1980. The individual commercial banks sponsored the setting up of a network of regional rural banks after nationalisation with a contribution of 50 per cent and 15 per cent participation of the central and the state governments respectively. By the end of 1986 the regional rural banks numbered 143 with about 13,000 branches spread over 341 districts of the country.

Table 6 Branching of Commercial Banks

<i>Centres</i>	<i>No. of Branches</i>	
	<i>19.7 69</i>	<i>31 3 1986</i>
Rural	1860(22 3)	29600(55 8)
Semi-urban	3344(40 2)	10600(20.0)
Urban	1460(17 5)	7600(14 3)
Metropolitan/ Port Towns	1660(20 0)	5300 (9.9)
Total	8320 (100)	53100 (100)

1) Figures within brackets are per cents of total number.

ii) Rural population up to 10,000, semi-urban: 10,000-1,00,000, urban: 1,00,000-10,00,00, metropolitan/port over 10,00,000.

Source R B I, *Report on currency and Finance*, 1985-86.

The pace with which the two aims of nationalisation mentioned above have been pursued is remarkable. Branch expansion has been the most aggressive feature showing the earnestness with which the political system wanted to monetise and/or mobilise the savings of the rural sector, and wanted to distribute credit to the component classes in this sector. It may be remembered that in the case of many branch offices their inauguration is very difficult to justify in terms of bank profitability. Table 6 shows the rural-urban breakup of branches before nationalisation and in 1986. The aggressive branch expansion has directly brought in larger deposits from the rural areas, which expanded from 6.4 per cent of total commercial bank deposits in 1969 to over 14 per cent in 1985.

Around the same time that banks were nationalised, the working funds required by the government also increased dramatically, because of the management of various benefit transfers to the new claimant groups. While a large part of these transfers are managed directly from the union budget, short-term working funds complementing these disbursements increased. The nationalised banks have provided the government with a captive source of short-term and medium-term finance, managed through the working of a statutory liquidity ratio that specifies the minimum ratio of government and other approved securities to total deposits of a commercial bank. The practice had

started quite early after Independence, in 1949, but was conceived of mainly as an instrument of credit control. But since nationalisation, because of the large deposit base of the commercial banks, the provision has kept the government well supplied. The statutory ratio has monotonically increased since Independence and is currently very close to the maximum of 40 per cent at which the RBI according to current acts can at the most raise it. The total outstanding investment in government and other approved securities in March 1985 was more than Rs 28,000 crore out of a total deposit liability of Rs 72,115 crore.

Finally one observes that the network of around 60,000 branches of the commercial banks has radically transformed the outlook of life throughout the country, by its sheer presence. The power of money which was to be seen so far in the large metropolitan towns or in isolated islands of development, is now present in every pore of this vast country, to witness, to feel intimidated, or to covet as the case may be. Credit deployment is managed through what is known as the Credit Authorisation Scheme, which is a well-intended scheme of the RBI leaving only a limited amount of discretion in lending activities at the different levels of the bank cadres' hierarchy. In practice the scheme has transformed itself into the opposite of what was intended. The discretion left with the bank cadres starting from a low limit at the local branch manager's level ascends upward. This has generated a pyramidal structure of positions of influence which can be cultivated by vested interests and politicians. Bank advances typically at the lower level is looked upon as a favour meted out by the government, and the success in getting a loan through the intermediation of a local politician often reinforces this belief of the common man. After Independence, as the grass-root organisation of the Indian National Congress slowly dried up, a major problem for it was to have an all-India network that would keep the people continuously aware of the presence of the ruling party and its ability to do favours. The huge edifice of the banking system has achieved this for the government. This however is no indictment of the functioning of the commercial banks, but a description of how it appears from the subjective position of the people, which is often utilised in electoral politics.

We conclude this section by noting the structural change in the deployment of credit since nationalisation. The figures in Table 7 tell the same political story, of the rise of new claimants for short-term funds in the system. In view of the fact that the deposits mobilised and credit advanced by the nationalised banking system originate and destine from and among mostly the new classes and strata, the entire system can be characterised as a nation-wide institution of intra-class financial intermediation. While the traditional business groups and classes had their traditional financial intermediation system and still hold on to it steadfastly, the new classes and groups had none.

Table 7. Structure of Credit Deployment

Sector	Amount outstanding in Rs Crores on the last Friday of	
	June '69	Dec' 85
Agriculture	188 0	8700
Small Scale Sector of which	294 0	N A
i. Small industries.	286 0	7400
ii Road and water transport operators	8 0	N A.
Other Priority Sectors	23 0	4400
Exports	270	
Total Bank Credit	3599	48000

Source RBI, *Report on Currency and Finance*, 1985-86

CHANGE IN ASSET STRUCTURE, LONG-TERM FUNDS AND POLITICS

All in all, the success of nationalisation has consisted in its ability to generate a flood of deposits in the organised sector that can be advanced to the up-coming claimant groups in the system, meet the increasing short-term fund requirement of the government and yet have enough short-term funds for industry. All industries (including small-scale) are currently sharing in about 50 per cent of all commercial bank advances, which is less than 67.5 per cent that it was getting in 1968, but the fall in share has been more than made good by the large increase in the total kitty of short-run funds.

Table 8. Evaluation of the Deposit Structure

	Rs crore, at the end of the year		
	1951	1969	1985
Total deposits	908	5173	84700
Time deposits	299.6	2896.9	68607
Time deposits as proportion of demand deposits	50	1.30	4.3

Source. Calculated from various issues of the statistical Tables relating to banks in India.

The success has been in a sense inherent in the pattern of our economic development. The new land-owning farmers, the urban petty bourgeoisie in the employ of the government and the private sector, and

the upcoming businessman had all one feature in common. Their income was rising much faster than cost of living and their savings were rising. But the Indian market did not provide them with a suitable asset to keep their savings embodied. Gold has less attraction for the new generation. In the case of the urban petty-bourgeoisie dwelling unit or a plot of land has been generally the most coveted asset, but the indivisibility of a minimum unit of this asset requires a substantial period over which the savings have to be kept accumulating. The petty bourgeoisie was looking for an asset which would be risk free and would at the same time allow some yield, on their savings until the target accumulation for acquiring a house or a plot of land is completed. Similarly the rich farmer and the businessmen were looking for an asset to keep their savings in-waiting in a risk-free but, yielding form. The growing savings and a complete aversion to risk characterised the petty bourgeoisie incomes which were on the rise since Independence, and the nationalised banks produced this much-awaited financial asset in the form of the time deposits in the commercial banks.⁸ Table 8 shows the rapid increase in the demand for this asset and the change in the deposit structure of commercial banks.

The success of nationalisation lies in mobilising the savings of the upcoming classes and creating credit out of it to advance mostly to the same groups for their short-term needs. It may be noted that the upcoming petty bourgeoisie and the rich farmers' arrival on the economic scene was recent. They did not have their own institution of intra-class mobilisation and lending like the older commercial classes had and still have. Nationalised commercial banks have to a large extent provided this much needed intermediation, of which a large part is indeed 'intra-class' financial intermediation.

However this brings us close to appreciating an intriguing financial problem for the Indian State. The new classes have readily lent to the government against a risk-free asset. We saw that the domestic commercial interests have steadfastly guarded their risk-free self-liquidating instruments within their own ranks, and approached the commercial banks for loans when the status of the loans are somewhat uncertain. All this implies that neither the old rich nor the new rich have shown any inclination towards risk-taking, and the government has ended up bearing the colossal amount of risk of the Indian private sector. The expansion of commercial bank deposits has not enabled the commercial banks to convert any significant part of the deposits into term loans to either the government or public sector financial institutions, because the working capital requirement of the system has increased *pari passu*.

The paucity of long-term funds has haunted the economic system from the beginning. Even though wealth even in monetary form was large in this vast country, equity capital from the private hoards was not forthcoming. Even in the vision of Indian big capital, it was the State that was expected to build up a fund for equity capital needs for the

entire system. After Independence term-lending institutions and funds for equity participation had to be set-up entirely with the resources of the government, the Reserve Bank of India, and foreign term-lending agencies. Only gradually has the government managed to create some subsidiaries of these institutions which accept public deposits, like the U T I and insurance companies. For example, the entire share capital of Rs 445 crore of IDBI has been provided by the Government of India. In turn the IDBI has subscribed to the share capital of IFCI which is its 50 per cent subsidiary, and the IRBI. The rest of the share capital of IFCI and IRBI is owned by the LIC and the nationalised banks. Similarly, ICICI is owned by nationalised banks, insurance companies and foreign financial institutions.

Far more symptomatic of the problem is the fact that the bonds issued by the development banks which are their principal source of funds apart from loans from the RBI, are entirely marketed to the public sector. Considered with the fact that the primary market for industrial shares is undeveloped and weak, it implies that the entire long-term funding, loans, equity, guaranteeing and underwriting goes on in the country at public risk. It also implies that for continued growth of the large private corporations, the government has to be able to find a continuous flow of long-run resources—a problem that only aggravates the fiscal problem of the government.

The bonds issued by the development banks, guaranteed by the Government of India, are for all practical purposes like government bonds, and thus their yield structure has to be similar to Government of India bonds of comparable maturity. Since the yields on the latter are kept low and are entirely marketed to captive institutions through statutory purchase provisions, there is no way that the bonds of the development banks can be made attractive to the public. As a result the Government of India and its term-lending institutions basically share in a 'statutory' borrowing power of the government, which cannot be extended without increasing the yield of government papers substantially, thus upsetting Indian public finance. A hard option is borrowing from abroad to increase the funds of the development banks, and a soft option is to borrow from the lender of the last resort, which may prove not so soft in the long run.

As we remarked earlier, the Indian bourgeoisie often dreamt of a regime of their own where the State will provide long-term finance for rapid capitalist development, and the present arrangement can be taken to have satisfied them. However the continuation of this arrangement since Independence has produced interesting consequences. In the atmosphere of relatively easier availability of short-term and medium-term funds, the Indian business houses have generally worked up their debt-equity ratio. This, coupled with increased equity participation by the lending institutions, and with occasional commutation of loan defaults into equity, has currently resulted in a situation where the government institutions have gained strategic control over a large

number of corporations belonging to important houses. This certainly is somewhat menacing from the viewpoint of large houses, not because they imagine any stealthy steps towards socialism into it, but plainly because the government in seat uses this holding for strategic manipulation between business houses, either for furthering factional interests within the ruling party or for furthering the general interest like funding the ruling party and its electioneering. Interventions in the regular day-to-day business of the firms are also on record, like manipulating trade union bargains in favour of the trade unions of the ruling party or arranging purchase contracts for favoured clients, etc. From the viewpoint of the industry this should not be particularly demanding, and in fact in a situation of overall constraint of funds this has been considered just a method of rationing. However, the recent volatility of Indian politics has created a problem particularly for many established houses, who would often find their investment on political factions or individuals overnight turning bad investment.

THE STOCK EXCHANGE

It is in this context that the recent attempts at developing a new issues market in India has to be seen. From the viewpoint of the government, a vibrant primary market will take away that much of pressure from the term-financing institutions or the government, thus easing the financial difficulty of the government. From the viewpoint of industry, it will provide them direct access to long-term funds, liberating them at least partially from the uncertainty of the swiftly changing political equations at the top and would ensure a steady flow of long-term funds irrespective of party politics in the country. The attempt dovetailed convincingly well into the general rhetoric of liberalisation of the government of Mr Rajiv Gandhi. In particular the series of concessions announced in the 1985-86 budget for the richer Indian and the private sector generated buoyant expectations about the immediate future of the private sector and the secondary market went up to dizzy heights. There was a concerted attempt by the government, the stock brokers and industry to convert this buoyancy of the secondary market into that of a steady primary market. For some time in 1985 and 1986, it almost seemed that the primary market had caught on. New issues thronged the market, over-subscription became the order of the day, and most issues were over-subscribed between 50 to 400 times. The total market participation reached 10 million people.

The boom did not last long. The budget of 1986-87 looked ambivalent, the political clout of the regime also started a decline, and a number of domestic and international developments showed the government as less capable than what the private sector initially took it for. The corporate news also was not any more cheerful, most companies declared dividends which were nothing to write home about. The continuous rise of stock prices meanwhile had eroded the gross yield drastically, and the market paused for a while to seek technical correction and then the

downhill movement picked momentum. According to some estimates the small investors lost around Rs. 3,500 crore of capital value and the brokers and black money operators another 4,000 crore during the slump. The fall in the secondary market washed out any hopes for a primary market for the time being.

The new participants in the market, the small businessman, business executives, the urban professionals and the rich farmers (in Bombay), had thronged around basically the secondary market, rather than the primary. Therefore their entry into the market did not signify any dramatic change in the sociology of the Indian small investor, as many observers thought. It was the result of a search for quick gains, which the regime had promised, the new issues advertised and the brokers confirmed. The primary market in 1985 had got its over-subscriptions as a spill-over from the secondary market. Thus with the first signs of a faltering bounty to the private sector the enthusiasm dried up.

The moral is that the savings of the rich, old as well as new, are as difficult to channel into equity capital as it was at Independence. It seems therefore that the situation regarding long-term funds is nearly back to square one. The government is most welcome to borrow these funds with risk-free papers at high enough yields, but short of that the new rich, the political allies of the government, are not going to provide long-term funds. The government has to continue to rely on itself and the RBI to provide the long-run funds for both the public as well as the private sectors. The government and the lending institutions are currently busy rescuing the stock market.⁹ It is more an effort to rehabilitate the stock-brokers rather than any serious belief that a primary market is going to develop in order to supply sizable equity funds. The government, itself now owner of sizeable stock of private sector equity, is not less anxious than the stock-brokers to stabilise the market.

Stock exchanges in India and for that matter in most countries that have taken to a capitalist development path after the Second World War, 'are still a place where the capitalists took [take] away each other's accumulated capital', as Engels had remarked about the stock exchange in U.K. before the crisis of 1866.¹⁰ It may be recalled that the rise of the stock exchanges historically occurred in a situation where a class of people had accumulated an immense wealth, but were not ready to take the plunge. These rentiers found an agreeable means of investing their wealth through the stock exchanges with the concurrent rise and institutionalisation of limited liability companies. In India (and in many other similarly placed countries) there are plenty of risk-free papers floating around by courtesy the government, and it makes no sense to expect that a sound primary market for new issues is going to develop at this stage. Booms in the secondary markets may come and go, but the primary market has no reason to get any permanent life from there. Thus, by supplying rentiers with risk-free papers in its

enthusiasm to promote capitalist growth, the State has in a sense preempted the growth of private capitalism

An alternative that the government seems to be seriously considering, particularly after the Chakravarty Committee submitted its report in 1985 is to step up direct borrowing at competitive prices. Early in 1987, the government floated a development bond for the public, the Indra Vikas Patra, and public sector organisations like National Thermal Power Corporation and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd also floated bonds for the market. The collections were discouraging for the latter two, failing to collect less than Rs 25 crore each, from a total of around 60,000 applicants. The Vikas Patra has been more successful, but the reasons are intriguing. It had a no-question-asked clause, which made it able to draw out black hoards to an extent. The Vikas Patra's doubling in five years is also substantially higher than anything so far on the Indian market, and on top of it, it is a bearer bond and thus liquid.

Borrowing at such exorbitant rates from black hoards of course have very severe moral, legal, social and political implications. But the plain economics of it is also not too savoury. For one thing the interest burden on the government will accentuate its fiscal problem, particularly when 15 per cent is far out of line with the profitability of the Indian public sector. But I suppose this comparison is irrelevant since the union government is habitually for some time now having a current account deficit, so that the loans can very well be going to meet the government's consumption requirement. When we realise that the major part of government's current account expenditure is for benefitting the affluent sections in the country, getting them transfer payment and maintaining and improving their real consumption, the absurdity of a policy of borrowing from the same class at a market plus interest rate appears most striking. The public budget, it means, has to pay an interest income to the rentiers as a price of improving their real income!¹¹ A bearer bond to reach black hoards has a second problem, of activating hitherto inactive money, and thus increasing the supply of money, which the entire exercise was designed to avoid.¹² It all adds up to suggest that long term funds are going to constitute a nearly impossible problem with the present coalition of classes in the society.

THE FISCAL CRISIS

We should now come back to our theme of the fiscal crisis. The economics of the growth of capitalism in our country requires large investable funds in the hands of the State, to be deployed either by itself in the public sector or to be handed over to the private sector through lending agencies or equity participation. On the other hand the politics of this very growth requires that a broad group of allies should be wooed through concessions, transfers and rentier incomes, all of which reduces the flow of resources for investment. In the early years, the State had indulged in large-scale resource transfers by

asserting its own right over common property, a process which has to that extent postponed a resource crisis. But at the same time the same process has created a mass of poor whose poverty, a direct consequence of State action, threatens to unsettle the entire political coalition, thus increasing the cost of maintaining the coalition further.

For managing the coalition and rationing favours to groups in the coalition, the government had to build up an enormous network of bureaucracy and government cadre, directly increasing the cost of the political system. The coalition has been managed by maintaining a *status quo* in the relative position of classes within it. This requires that a grant or transfer given to one class has to be matched by a similar favour to another, resulting in an escalation of transfer expenditure. Also, since the overall growth of production is slow, and tax and imposts on the well-to-do cannot be increased, the cumulative rise in transfer and consumption expenditure can be met only by a continuous squeeze on the real income of the common people. This used to take place through indirect tax increases, but more recently a hike in public sector prices, and upward revision of nominal income of all inside the coalition have become more common.

The arithmetic result is simple. The growth of consumption expenditure of the government (i.e., the cost of managing and saving the political system) and transfer expenditures (i.e., the cost of favours to groups inside the coalition) has more recently resulted in a situation where the entire current revenue of the government is exhausted by these two expenses, and the government has a current account deficit. The growth of the government's consumption expenditure was most conspicuous during the period covered under the Second Five-Year Plan to the period under the Fifth Five-Year Plan, when it rose on an average by more than 20 per cent per annum at current prices. This was the period of the growth of the government machinery and expansion of government cadre. The rate of growth has since fallen off and in the eighties, consumption expenses take up about 20 per cent of the total annual government expenditure.

Transfer expenses began as a large component of total expenditure from the very inception of the new State. It comprised 23 per cent of total expenditure in 1950-51, gradually increasing to 41.3 per cent of total expenditure according to the budget estimates for 1985-86, this increase in proportion has been monotonic and has proceeded at an increasing speed since 1968-69. In fact the estimates are based on the classification of the Ministry of Finance, and it is possible to claim that several items which from the point of view of political economy are actually transfers to different interest groups are not included in this classification, but I do not have the documents necessary to make a proper reclassification of expense items in terms of government's consumption and transfers, at the moment. The fiscal result is preemption of resources for public investment, which is the first objective of the leaders of the political coalition. It is a crisis in the

sense that while maintaining the coalition with the present rules of the game, it is not possible to stimulate the growth of industry

There is however nothing sacrosanct about the growth of industry as such, from the viewpoint of private capital, small or large, what matters to capital is the opportunity to grow larger, and as long as there is plenty of that opportunity through investment in land, services, financial assets, etc., the individual capitalists need not perceive the crisis. But industrial growth is an objective necessity for the system to continue, since given the political system described above, stagnating industry and productivity will imply that the growth of capital is taking place simply by a redistribution of income against the members outside the coalition. And that is the most disturbing for the State that embodies the political system, since it increases the probability of attack on the coalition from outside.

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- 1 For somewhat more detailed discussion of the fiscal crisis see Amal Sanyal, 'The Economic Policy: An Overview', in *Social Scientist*, No 151, 1986, (also reprinted in *India's New Economic Policy*, Ruddar Dutt (ed.), S Chand & Co., Delhi, 1987)
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- 12 See Arun Ghosh, 'From the Ivory Tower: Black Money Clout and the Indira Vikas Patra', *Economic and Political Weekly*, December, 1986

Table 7 *Structure of Credit Deployment*

Sector	Amount outstanding in Rs. Crores on the last Friday of	
	June '69	Dec' 85
Agriculture	188 0	8700
Small Scale Sector of which	294 0	N A.
i Small industries	286 0	7400
ii Road and water transport operators	8 0	N A.
Other Priority Sectors	23 0	4400
Exports	270	
Total Bank Credit	3599	48000

Source: RBI, *Report on Currency and Finance*, 1985-86

CHANGE IN ASSET STRUCTURE, LONG-TERM FUNDS AND POLITICS

All in all, the success of nationalisation has consisted in its ability to generate a flood of deposits in the organised sector that can be advanced to the up-coming claimant groups in the system, meet the increasing short-term fund requirement of the government and yet have enough short-term funds for industry. All industries (including small-scale) are currently sharing in about 50 per cent of all commercial bank advances, which is less than 67.5 per cent that it was getting in 1968, but the fall in share has been more than made good by the large increase in the total kitty of short-run funds.

Table 8. *Evaluation of the Deposit Structure*

	Rs. crore, at the end of the year		
	1951	1969	1985
Total deposits	908	5173	84700
Time deposits	299.6	2896.9	68 607
Time deposits as proportion of demand deposits	50	1.30	4.3

Source. Calculated from various issues of the statistical Tables relating to banks in India.

The success has been in a sense inherent in the pattern of our economic development. The new land-owning farmers, the urban petty bourgeoisie in the employ of the government and the private sector, and

the upcoming businessman had all one feature in common. Their income was rising much faster than cost of living and their savings were rising. But the Indian market did not provide them with a suitable asset to keep their savings embodied. Gold has less attraction for the new generation. In the case of the urban petty-bourgeoisie dwelling unit or a plot of land has been generally the most coveted asset, but the indivisibility of a minimum unit of this asset requires a substantial period over which the savings have to be kept accumulating. The petty bourgeoisie was looking for an asset which would be risk free and would at the same time allow some yield, on their savings until the target accumulation for acquiring a house or a plot of land is completed. Similarly the rich farmer and the businessmen were looking for an asset to keep their savings in-waiting in a risk-free but, yielding form. The growing savings and a complete aversion to risk characterised the petty bourgeoisie incomes which were on the rise since Independence, and the nationalised banks produced this much-awaited financial asset in the form of the time deposits in the commercial banks.⁸ Table 8 shows the rapid increase in the demand for this asset and the change in the deposit structure of commercial banks.

The success of nationalisation lies in mobilising the savings of the upcoming classes and creating credit out of it to advance mostly to the same groups for their short-term needs. It may be noted that the upcoming petty bourgeoisie and the rich farmers' arrival on the economic scene was recent. They did not have their own institution of intra-class mobilisation and lending like the older commercial classes had and still have. Nationalised commercial banks have to a large extent provided this much needed intermediation, of which a large part is indeed 'intra-class' financial intermediation.

However this brings us close to appreciating an intriguing financial problem for the Indian State. The new classes have readily lent to the government against a risk-free asset. We saw that the domestic commercial interests have steadfastly guarded their risk-free self-liquidating instruments within their own ranks, and approached the commercial banks for loans when the status of the loans are somewhat uncertain. All this implies that neither the old rich nor the new rich have shown any inclination towards risk-taking, and the government has ended up bearing the colossal amount of risk of the Indian private sector. The expansion of commercial bank deposits has not enabled the commercial banks to convert any significant part of the deposits into term loans to either the government or public sector financial institutions, because the working capital requirement of the system has increased *pari passu*.

The paucity of long-term funds has haunted the economic system from the beginning. Even though wealth even in monetary form was large in this vast country, equity capital from the private hoards was not forthcoming. Even in the vision of Indian big capital, it was the State that was expected to build up a fund for equity capital needs for the

entire system. After Independence term-lending institutions and funds for equity participation had to be set-up entirely with the resources of the government, the Reserve Bank of India, and foreign term-lending agencies. Only gradually has the government managed to create some subsidiaries of these institutions which accept public deposits, like the U T I and insurance companies. For example, the entire share capital of Rs 445 crore of IDBI has been provided by the Government of India. In turn the IDBI has subscribed to the share capital of IFCI which is its 50 per cent subsidiary, and the IRBI. The rest of the share capital of IFCI and IRBI is owned by the LIC and the nationalised banks. Similarly, ICICI is owned by nationalised banks, insurance companies and foreign financial institutions.

Far more symptomatic of the problem is the fact that the bonds issued by the development banks which are their principal source of funds apart from loans from the RBI, are entirely marketed to the public sector. Considered with the fact that the primary market for industrial shares is undeveloped and weak, it implies that the entire long-term funding, loans, equity, guaranteeing and underwriting goes on in the country at public risk. It also implies that for continued growth of the large private corporations, the government has to be able to find a continuous flow of long-run resources—a problem that only aggravates the fiscal problem of the government.

The bonds issued by the development banks, guaranteed by the Government of India, are for all practical purposes like government bonds, and thus their yield structure has to be similar to Government of India bonds of comparable maturity. Since the yields on the latter are kept low and are entirely marketed to captive institutions through statutory purchase provisions, there is no way that the bonds of the development banks can be made attractive to the public. As a result the Government of India and its term-lending institutions basically share in a 'statutory' borrowing power of the government, which cannot be extended without increasing the yield of government papers substantially, thus upsetting Indian public finance. A hard option is borrowing from abroad to increase the funds of the development banks, and a soft option is to borrow from the lender of the last resort, which may prove not so soft in the long run.

As we remarked earlier, the Indian bourgeoisie often dreamt of a regime of their own where the State will provide long-term finance for rapid capitalist development, and the present arrangement can be taken to have satisfied them. However the continuation of this arrangement since Independence has produced interesting consequences. In the atmosphere of relatively easier availability of short-term and medium-term funds, the Indian business houses have generally worked up their debt-equity ratio. This, coupled with increased equity participation by the lending institutions, and with occasional commutation of loan defaults into equity, has currently resulted in a situation where the government institutions have gained strategic control over a large

number of corporations belonging to important houses. This certainly is somewhat menacing from the viewpoint of large houses, not because they imagine any stealthy steps towards socialism into it, but plainly because the government in seat uses this holding for strategic manipulation between business houses, either for furthering factional interests within the ruling party or for furthering the general interest like funding the ruling party and its electioneering. Interventions in the regular day-to-day business of the firms are also on record, like manipulating trade union bargains in favour of the trade unions of the ruling party or arranging purchase contracts for favoured clients, etc. From the viewpoint of the industry this should not be particularly demanding, and in fact in a situation of overall constraint of funds this has been considered just a method of rationing. However, the recent volatility of Indian politics has created a problem particularly for many established houses, who would often find their investment on political factions or individuals overnight turning bad investment.

THE STOCK EXCHANGE

It is in this context that the recent attempts at developing a new issues market in India has to be seen. From the viewpoint of the government, a vibrant primary market will take away that much of pressure from the term-financing institutions or the government, thus easing the financial difficulty of the government. From the viewpoint of industry, it will provide them direct access to long-term funds, liberating them at least partially from the uncertainty of the swiftly changing political equations at the top and would ensure a steady flow of long-term funds irrespective of party politics in the country. The attempt dovetailed convincingly well into the general rhetoric of liberalisation of the government of Mr Rajiv Gandhi. In particular the series of concessions announced in the 1985-86 budget for the richer Indian and the private sector generated buoyant expectations about the immediate future of the private sector and the secondary market went up to dizzy heights. There was a concerted attempt by the government, the stock brokers and industry to convert this buoyancy of the secondary market into that of a steady primary market. For some time in 1985 and 1986 it almost seemed that the primary market had caught on. New issues thronged the market; over-subscription became the order of the day, and most issues were over-subscribed between 50 to 400 times. The total market participation reached 10 million people.

The boom did not last long. The budget of 1986-87 looked ambivalent, the political clout of the regime also started a decline, and a number of domestic and international developments showed the government as less capable than what the private sector initially took it for. The corporate news also was not any more cheerful, most companies declared dividends which were nothing to write home about. The continuous rise of stock prices meanwhile had eroded the gross yield drastically, and the market paused for a while to seek technical correction and then the

downhill movement picked momentum. According to some estimates the small investors lost around Rs. 3,500 crore of capital value and the brokers and black money operators another 4,000 crore during the slump. The fall in the secondary market washed out any hopes for a primary market for the time being.

The new participants in the market, the small businessman, business executives, the urban professionals and the rich farmers (in Bombay), had thronged around basically the secondary market, rather than the primary. Therefore their entry into the market did not signify any dramatic change in the sociology of the Indian small investor, as many observers thought. It was the result of a search for quick gains, which the regime had promised, the new issues advertised and the brokers confirmed. The primary market in 1985 had got its over-subscriptions as a spill-over from the secondary market. Thus with the first signs of a faltering bounty to the private sector the enthusiasm dried up.

The moral is that the savings of the rich, old as well as new, are as difficult to channel into equity capital as it was at Independence. It seems therefore that the situation regarding long-term funds is nearly back to square one. The government is most welcome to borrow these funds with risk-free papers at high enough yields, but short of that the new rich, the political allies of the government, are not going to provide long-term funds. The government has to continue to rely on itself and the RBI to provide the long-run funds for both the public as well as the private sectors. The government and the lending institutions are currently busy rescuing the stock market.⁹ It is more an effort to rehabilitate the stock-brokers rather than any serious belief that a primary market is going to develop in order to supply sizable equity funds. The government, itself now owner of sizeable stock of private sector equity, is not less anxious than the stock-brokers to stabilise the market.

Stock exchanges in India and for that matter in most countries that have taken to a capitalist development path after the Second World War, 'are still a place where the capitalists took [take] away each other's accumulated capital', as Engels had remarked about the stock exchange in U.K. before the crisis of 1866.¹⁰ It may be recalled that the rise of the stock exchanges historically occurred in a situation where a class of people had accumulated an immense wealth, but were not ready to take the plunge. These rentiers found an agreeable means of investing their wealth through the stock exchanges with the concurrent rise and institutionalisation of limited liability companies. In India (and in many other similarly placed countries) there are plenty of risk-free papers floating around by courtesy the government, and it makes no sense to expect that a sound primary market for new issues is going to develop at this stage. Booms in the secondary markets may come and go, but the primary market has no reason to get any permanent life from there. Thus, by supplying rentiers with risk-free papers in its

enthusiasm to promote capitalist growth, the State has in a sense preempted the growth of private capitalism

An alternative that the government seems to be seriously considering, particularly after the Chakravarty Committee submitted its report in 1985 is to step up direct borrowing at competitive prices. Early in 1987, the government floated a development bond for the public, the Indira Vikas Patra, and public sector organisations like National Thermal Power Corporation and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd also floated bonds for the market. The collections were discouraging for the latter two, failing to collect less than Rs 25 crore each, from a total of around 60,000 applicants. The Vikas Patra has been more successful, but the reasons are intriguing. It had a no-question-asked clause, which made it able to draw out black hoards to an extent. The Vikas Patra's doubling in five years is also substantially higher than anything so far on the Indian market, and on top of it, it is a bearer bond and thus liquid.

Borrowing at such exorbitant rates from black hoards of course have very severe moral, legal, social and political implications. But the plain economics of it is also not too savoury. For one thing the interest burden on the government will accentuate its fiscal problem, particularly when 15 per cent is far out of line with the profitability of the Indian public sector. But I suppose this comparison is irrelevant since the union government is habitually for some time now having a current account deficit, so that the loans can very well be going to meet the government's consumption requirement. When we realise that the major part of government's current account expenditure is for benefitting the affluent sections in the country, getting them transfer payment and maintaining and improving their real consumption, the absurdity of a policy of borrowing from the same class at a market plus interest rate appears most striking. The public budget, it means, has to pay an interest income to the rentiers as a price of improving their real income.¹¹ A bearer bond to reach black hoards has a second problem, of activating hitherto inactive money, and thus increasing the supply of money, which the entire exercise was designed to avoid.¹² It all adds up to suggest that long term funds are going to constitute a nearly impossible problem with the present coalition of classes in the society.

THE FISCAL CRISIS

We should now come back to our theme of the fiscal crisis. The economics of the growth of capitalism in our country requires large investable funds in the hands of the State, to be deployed either by itself in the public sector or to be handed over to the private sector through lending agencies or equity participation. On the other hand the politics of this very growth requires that a broad group of allies should be wooed through concessions, transfers and rentier incomes, all of which reduces the flow of resources for investment. In the early years, the State had indulged in large-scale resource transfers by

asserting its own right over common property, a process which has to that extent postponed a resource crisis. But at the same time the same process has created a mass of poor whose poverty, a direct consequence of State action, threatens to unsettle the entire political coalition, thus increasing the cost of maintaining the coalition further.

For managing the coalition and rationing favours to groups in the coalition, the government had to build up an enormous network of bureaucracy and government cadre, directly increasing the cost of the political system. The coalition has been managed by maintaining a *status quo* in the relative position of classes within it. This requires that a grant or transfer given to one class has to be matched by a similar favour to another, resulting in an escalation of transfer expenditure. Also, since the overall growth of production is slow, and tax and imposts on the well-to-do cannot be increased, the cumulative rise in transfer and consumption expenditure can be met only by a continuous squeeze on the real income of the common people. This used to take place through indirect tax increases, but more recently a hike in public sector prices, and upward revision of nominal income of all inside the coalition have become more common.

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sense that while maintaining the coalition with the present rules of the game, it is not possible to stimulate the growth of industry

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rural population which have benefitted the most from this growth

Table 7 Percentage Distribution of Debt Over Rate of Interest and Household Asset

<i>Asset in (Rs 1000)</i>	<i>Nil</i>	<i>upto 10 %</i>	<i>10-15%</i>	<i>15-20%</i>	<i>Above 20 %</i>	<i>All groups</i>
Upto 1	22 64	2 08	14 14	4 48	56 66	100 00
1 - 5	18.05	6 56	19 30	7 78	48 31	100 00
5 - 10	22 54	9 98	23 34	8 62	35.52	100 00
10 - 20	15 22	10 02	32 02	10 05	32 72	100 00
20 - 50	11 29	11 60	37 13	13 94	26 04	100 00
50 - 100	12 02	8 69	42 77	14 40	22 07	100 00
100 - 500	7 49	7 85	55 60	16 99	12 06	100 00
Above 500	4 40	3.47	77 89	12 49	1 76	100 00
All groups	11 20	8 80	44 50	13 68	21 79	

A look at Tables 8 and 9 tells us that the proportion of outstanding debt taken from institutional sources goes on rising as we go up the asset holding ladder. While the poorest group holding assets of value less than Rs 1000 secured about 9 per cent of their debts from institutional sources those holding assets above Rs 5 lakh got about 95 per cent of their debts from public institutions. Between 1971 and 1981 banks have entered the rural sector at a very fast rate and their share of credit supply has become almost equal to that of cooperatives, both together accounting for nearly 60 per cent credit supply which has gone mainly to the rural rich.

It may also be noted that even the present survey, with all its underestimation of private sources of credit, has to concede that landlords, moneylenders (both agricultural and traditional) and traders together supplied about 24.2 per cent or nearly one-fourth of rural credit and therefore constitute an important source of credit supply. Among the states which supply the highest proportion of institutional credit are Maharashtra (84.4 per cent), Orissa (81.9 per cent), Kerala (78.6 per cent), Karnataka (78.2 per cent), Haryana (75.8 per cent) and Himachal (74.5 per cent). The states with low proportions of institutional credit are Assam (30.6 per cent), Andhra (40.9 per cent), Rajasthan (40.9 per cent), J & K (43.5 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (44.3 per cent).

Purpose of loan Table 10 gives the percentage distribution of indebted households, the share of loans and average debt per indebtedness reporting rural household on the basis of the purpose for which the loan was taken. Only 6.61 per cent of cultivators took loans for capital expenditure on farm business, but their share in the total amount of loan

taken was as high as 45.15 per cent. Among non-cultivators, 1.1 per cent of households obtained 18.95 per cent of loans for capital expenditure on non-farm business, which means purchase of milch cattle or machines like handlooms.

Table 8 Percentage Distribution of Debts from Institutional and Non-institutional Sources Over Asset Groups

<i>Asset 1000 Rs</i>	<i>Institutional</i>	<i>Non-institutional</i>	<i>All households</i>
1 Upto 1	8.93	91.08	100.00
2 1 - 5	28.60	71.43	100.00
3 5 - 10	32.55	67.45	100.00
4 10 - 20	45.69	54.31	100.00
5 20 - 50	55.06	44.94	100.00
6 50 - 100	57.99	42.01	100.00
7 100 - 500	76.39	23.61	100.00
8 Above 500	94.90	5.10	100.00
All groups	61.21	38.79	100.00

Table 9 Percentage Distribution of Debt Over Agency — Rural Sector

<i>Agency</i>	<i>For cultivator households (on 30.6.1971)</i>	<i>For all households (on 30.6.1981)</i>	<i>For all households (on 30.6.1981)</i>
1 Govt dept etc,	7.1	3.9	3.9
2 Cooperative etc	22.0	29.9	28.7
3 Commercial banks	2.4	28.9	28.0
4 Insurance	0.1	0.3	0.3
5 Provident fund	0.1	0.2	0.2
6 Institutional agencies	31.7	68.2	61.2
7 Landlords	8.1	3.6	4.0
8 Agricultural moneylenders	23.0	8.3	8.6
9 Professional moneylenders	13.1	7.8	8.2
10 Traders	8.4	3.2	3.4
11 Relatives and friends	13.1	8.7	9.1
12 Others	2.6	5.2	5.5
Non-institutional agencies	68.3	36.8	38.8
All agencies	100.00	100.00	100.00

In the survey, purchase of land for housesites and construction of houses were included in 'household expenses', which happens to be the second most important purpose for obtaining loans. Thus 'household expenses' for high asset holding groups means expenses to enhance their asset holdings, while for poor sections they mainly mean expenses for a

subsistence level of existence Non-cultivators had to take more than half of their loans for this purpose

Table 10. Percentage of Indebted Households, Share of Debt and Average Debt Per Indebted Household

	P/S/A	Cultivator	Non-cultivator	All households
Capital exp on farm business	P	6.61	0.56	5.18
	S	45.15	8.56	42.46
	A	5411	3064	5350
Current exp on farm business	P	5.97	0.54	4.68
	S	18.48	5.93	17.56
	A	2453	2208	2446
Capital exp on non-farm business	P	1.03	1.10	1.05
	S	6.34	18.95	7.26
	A	4863	3466	4514
Current exp. on non-farm business	P	0.46	0.59	0.42
	S	1.56	4.31	1.76
	A	2675	1469	2330
Household exp.	P	7.88	8.38	8.00
	S	28.07	50.90	22.34
	A	2019	1227	1822
Repayment of debts	P	0.20	0.15	0.18
	S	0.74	1.29	0.78
	A	2995	1792	2765
Litigation exp.	P	1.89	11.08	1.70
	S	7.46	9.96	7.64
	A	3123	1866	2938
Unspecified	P	0.08	0.04	0.07
	S	0.21	0.10	0.20
	A	2041	446	1805
All types	P	21.68	12.04	19.40
	S	100.00	100.00	100.00
	A	3656	1678	3365

P. % of indebted households, S share of debt incurred for cash purpose, A average debt on 30.681

Table 11. Percent Distribution in 1971 & 1981 Over Purposes of Debt

	Percent Share Indebt Outstanding on 30 June					
	Cultivators		Non-cultivators		All households	
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981
Capital exp. on farm business	34.7	45.2	5.0	8.0	31.2	42.5
Current exp. on farm business	15.0	18.5	2.5	5.0	13.5	17.6
Capital exp. on non-farm business	3.2	6.3	8.0	19.0	3.7	7.3
Current exp. on non-farm business	1.1	1.8	5.7	4.3	1.7	1.8
Productive exp. (1+2+3+4)	54.0	71.6	21.2	37.8	50.1	69.2
Household exp.	37.8	20.1	63.3	50.9	40.9	22.3
Repayment of debt	1.5	0.7	4.0	1.3	1.8	0.8
Litigation etc.	6.4	7.5	11.1	10.0	6.9	7.6
Unspecified	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.2
Total non-productive	8.2	8.4	15.5	11.4	9.0	8.6

A look at Table 11 tells us that the share of capital and current expenditure on farm and non-farm business (which the survey calls 'production purposes'), increased from 54.0 to 71.6 per cent between 1971 and 1981. As loans for these purposes were obtained by only 11.4 per cent of rural households in 1981, the conclusion that can be drawn is that *the growth in institutional credit is mainly accounted for by investments on an increasing scale in farm and non-farm business. In other words it is increasingly becoming an instrument of development on capitalist lines in the rural sector.* Table 12 further substantiates this conclusion. It tells us that *bigger the amount of loans, higher is the share utilised for productive purposes. Those who obtain loans in amounts exceeding Rs 5 lakh utilise about 97 per cent for farm and non-farm business in the form of capital and current expenses.*

Duration of loan. Table 13 gives the percentage distribution of the amount of outstanding cash dues over 1961, 1971 and 1981. More than a fourth of the loans are more than 4 years old, while about 65 per cent are more than a year old.

Asset holding and debt amount. Table 14 tells us that the largest number of indebted households among cultivators were indebted to the tune of Rs 2000 to Rs 5000, sharing among themselves about 20 per cent

of total outstanding dues. Among the non-cultivators, this group of indebted persons accounted for 35 per cent of outstanding dues, although in number the largest group among them had dues upto Rs. 500 only

Table 12 Share of Debt by Purpose of Loan and Asset (Rural Sector)

Asset 1000 Rs	Productive purposes	Household expenses	Repayment of debt	Other	All purpose
Up to 1	15 17	79 04	0 00	5 79	100 00
1 - 5	29 35	59 47	0.85	10 35	100 00
5 - 10	41 15	44 94	0 62	13 29	100.00
10 - 20	53 71	34 42	0.80	11 07	100.00
20 - 50	64 28	27 15	0.81	7 76	100 00
50 - 100	73 42	19 30	1 03	6 25	100 00
100 - 500	81 02	10 10	0 70	8.18	100.00
Above 500	96 98	1.64	0.45	0 56	100 00
All groups	69 07	22 33	0 76	7 84	100 00

Notes 1. Productive purposes include capital and current expenses on farm and non-farm business 2 Litigation expenses included in others.

Table 13 Percentage Distribution Duration of Debts by Asset Groups

Duration of Loan	Cultivator/Non-cultivator/All households				
	1961	1971	1981		
Below 1	38 0	34 0	35 0	40 8	35 4
1 - 2	20 6	21 8	20 4	19 9	20 4
2 - 3	11 8	15 6	12 2	12 2	12.2
3 - 4	8 3	9.2	16 9	5 3	6 8
4 - 5	5 0	4 2	4 1	1.7	3 9
5 - 10	9 2	10.0	18 0	18.4	13 0
10 & above	6.0	1.4	2 5	1 0	2 4
Unspecified	1 1	1 0	0 9	0 7	0 9
Total	100 00	100 00	100 00	100 00	100 00

Table 15 divides the different asset holding groups into those having dues in value not exceeding the upper limit of the group in terms of assets and those with outstanding dues within this limit The latter group numbers 16 05 per cent of all rural households, but shares 54 7 per cent of all debts in the asset group holding upto Rs. 1000 This group has some significance only in the asset group holding assets worth Rs 5000 among cultivators and upto Rs 10000 among non-cultivators.

Table 14 *Percentage Distribution of Outstanding Dues Over Size Group of Loans*

Loans in 1000 Rs	% of No of Household			% of Amount of Loan		
	Culti- vator	Non-culti- vator	All household	Culti- vator	Non-culti- vator	All household
Upto 0.5	18.0	32.6	20.2	1.3	5.1	1.6
0.5 - 1	17.5	20.8	18.0	3.2	7.8	3.6
1 - 2	20.3	20.8	20.2	7.4	10.2	8.0
2 - 5	25.8	20.0	24.7	21.5	34.8	22.4
5 - 10	11.5	5.0	10.8	21.2	20.0	21.2
10 - 20	4.6	0.8	4.1	16.7	8.6	16.2
20 - 50	1.8	—	1.5	13.1	2.7	12.3
50 - 100	0.5	—	0.5	8.7	1.7	8.2
100 & above	—	—	—	6.9	3.1	6.6
All groups	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 15. *Percentage Distribution of Debt and Outstanding Dues*

Asset in 1000 Rs	% Distribution of Debt			% Distribution of Outstanding Dues		
	A	B	All	A	B	All
Upto 1	83.95	16.05	100.00	45.30	54.70	100.00
1 - 5	96.70	3.30	100.00	77.75	22.25	100.00
5 - 10	99.48	0.52	100.00	95.32	4.68	100.00
10 - 20	100.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
20 - 50	90.91	0.09	100.00	98.02	1.98	100.00
50 - 100	100.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	100.00

A - Size of debt not exceeding upper limit of the reporting Asset Group

B - Size of debt exceeding the upper limit to the reporting Asset Group

CONCLUSION

Attitude Towards Credit Institutions

The survey shows that institutional credit from banks and cooperatives serve mainly the richer sections of middle peasants. The amount of loan taken and the share in total outstanding dues rises with the assets held. Holders of assets worth Rs 5 lakh or more utilise their entire loan for making investments in farm and non-farm business. Not surprisingly the bulk of cooperative credit goes to these classes. Cooperatives and banks are a part of a bourgeois banking system which aims at mobilising small savings to be placed at the disposal of capitalist entrepreneurs. After the land reforms of the fifties, the bourgeois-landlord government of the country pursued a policy of

relying upon landlords and rich peasants to increase agricultural production, adopting the 'green-revolution' strategy of technological development without changing the pre-capitalist land relations through radical land reforms. Huge amounts of capital resources were needed to enable these rural vested interests to secure needed inputs of fertilisers, HYV seeds, implements, etc. At first the expansion of cooperatives was utilised for this purpose and later, with the nationalisation of banks in 1969, they were asked to open branches in the rural areas. But only a part of the deposits mobilised by the commercial banks in the rural areas are being spent on agricultural development (about 16-18% of total priority sector credit) and the rest is being handed over to monopoly industrialists and businessmen.

Demand for Waiver of Loans

The All India Kisan Sabha has been demanding since its inception complete liquidation of old debts and scaling down of debts of the poor. In a country with a huge mass of people living below poverty line, with devastating floods and famines almost an annual occurrence, such a demand is inevitable till the social setup is changed and causes of poverty are totally removed. *It is necessary to press the demand for liquidation of old debts and scaling down of new debts for the poorer sections—agricultural workers, poor peasants and artisans, irrespective of the fact that the loan was taken from individuals or institutions.* To save the institutions, the government may have to disburse the money, defining the sections needing relief and to what extent.

Even for other sections who suffer losses due to non-payment of remunerative prices or ravages of natural calamities, it is necessary to provide relief, though the form and extent should be decided based on existing local/regional conditions and the extent of damages suffered. We should demand an effective insurance cover for such losses. The bulk of poor peasants, agricultural workers, artisans and other rural poor have still to depend on credit supplied by landlords, moneylenders and traders. In their case, a programme of action should include the demands: (i) All loans, where double the capital amount has been paid, should be annulled, and the remaining amount should be documented with a maximum rate of simple interest of 15 per cent. (ii) Alternative arrangements for supply of loans to the concerned debtors must be made simultaneously with the annulment of previous loans, with the rate of interest not exceeding 10 per cent. The demand for a general waiver of all cooperative and bank credit cannot be supported, especially when it includes as beneficiaries those who have taken loans for tractors and other costly machinery.

It is necessary that the indebtedness situation and the existing credit supply arrangements of each state be concretely studied and proper demands formulated for each state and region.

P K TANDON
Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha

BOOK REVIEW

The Tribal Economy: Continuity or Change?

M K SUKUMARAN NAIR, *Tribal Economy in Transition*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1987.

In analysing the dynamics of change in pre-capitalist 'tribal' societies, particular emphasis has been laid on the role of trade, penetration of markets and monetisation. These 'exogenous' factors of change which result from contact with other economies, are seen as important in breaking down the traditional mode of subsistence production and effecting a transition to a new mode often characterised by the development of commercial agriculture and a changing agrarian structure.

Sukumaran Nair's study of a 'Tribal Economy in Transition' assumes significance in understanding the nature of this transition. He focuses on the state of Meghalaya which, for historical reasons, has experienced relatively early commercialisation, market relations and some degree of monetisation. What is significant to him is the fact that despite these exogenous factors usually associated with changes in tribal societies (and he refers to a number of studies in this context), the mode of production continues to be 'tribal', i.e., predominantly characterised by communal ownership of land and poorly developed productive forces, with little differentiation of the peasantry and kinship as dominant in economic and social relations. The book analyses this paradox, tracing in the process, the nature of the dynamic in the 'transitional' economy.

Nair's study, which forms part of his Ph.D. thesis, is based on a survey of 60 tribal villages (487 households) in Meghalaya, covering the three major tribal groups, Garos, Khasis and Jaintias. It was part of a large ICSSR project with collection of data by trained investigators. Nair uses the data to show that despite the fact that a substantial portion of agricultural produce is sold in the market by all households, irrespective of the size of individual land holdings, there is no indication of a trend towards capital intensive farming. Surplus income is only marginally reinvested in agriculture (p. 112). While there has been a gradual shift from the traditional pattern of 'Jhum'

(shifting) cultivation to the relatively more advanced 'settled' cultivation, production relations in the latter have not altered significantly. Though where 'settled cultivation prevails, permanent rights in land are common' (p. 55), no market in land has emerged nor has there been any significant differentiation among the peasantry.

The author attributes the stability of the agrarian structure to the constraints on private initiative and enterprise that are imposed by traditional social institutions such as the matrilineal system of inheritance, the practice of 'ultimogeniture', as well as the communal nature of land tenure (p. 141). In addition, he feels that State policy, which prevents non-tribals from acquiring land in the State, also helps preserve the traditional social structure.

What the author does see in terms of change in the economy is the gradual move from shifting to more intensive methods of settled cultivation because of a rising man-land ratio and the subsequent 'inability of Jhum economy to reproduce itself' (p. 144). Nair characterises this as a process of 'population induced technical change'. While this is so and private property is seen to have emerged in areas where there is settled cultivation (the author equates land under settled cultivation with that which is privately owned), traditional social relations appear to still play a dominant role. For instance, he says, 'the relapse of resettled Jhumias into shifting cultivation in certain parts of Meghalaya should be viewed against the obstinacy to change inherent in the social relations' (p. 127).

What strikes a reader interested in the study of change in tribal societies is the significant absence of analysis and discussion of the major tribal groups. While the Garos and Khasis do have certain traditional social institutions in common (land tenure, matrilineal inheritance, etc.), significant differences have also emerged among them because of dissimilar historical experiences. The major section of Khasis are settled cultivators as compared to Garos among whom Jhum cultivation is predominant. The latter retain the communal character of land tenure to a greater degree. On the other hand there is greater recognition of private ownership rights to land among Khasis.¹ While the present study looks at tribal households in general, it is possible that a comparison between tribal groups in the context of their varied historical experiences could have helped trace the specificities of change within the larger tribal economy.

Nair attributes the slow pace of change in the economy to the constraining influence of the system of land tenure and inheritance. However, this appears more of a general statement than the result of a detailed study. It is important that communal ownership of land and the matrilineal system of inheritance are closely interwoven with the practice of shifting cultivation. Where settled cultivation has become a way of life, not only are private ownership rights to land recognised but social rules are found to be less rigid.² Whether traditional institutions continue to impede the momentum of change, or whether

the major constraints lie elsewhere, can possibly be better understood in a more intensive study which focuses on changes taking place among specific tribal groups, or between different sections within the same tribe

Nair is right when he says that large-scale census surveys often fail to understand the specificity of the tribal situation. For instance, reciprocal exchange of labour between kin households (an important source of labour in Jhum cultivation) is often either ignored or taken as synonymous with wage labour in many surveys. However, his contention that 'hired labour' reported in Meghalaya is only a modified form of traditional exchange labour and 'is not wage labour per se' (p. 101) needs careful consideration, particularly since he takes this to be a major indication of an undifferentiated tribal peasantry. Though Nair does make a distinction between 'family', 'hired,' and 'exchange labour,' he does not show how he actually differentiates between the latter two kinds of labour. If kinship reciprocities define that which is called exchange labour, in what way has labour hired for wages been characterised by him as a modified form of exchange labour? This is important, as Nair's survey data reveals a significant percentage of hired labour in the labour use pattern not merely in settled holdings (34 per cent) but in Jhum holdings as well (22 per cent). In comparison, exchange labour appears less important even in households engaged in Jhum cultivation (Table 8.5).

We are not given the proportion of household income that comes from wage labour. It is hence difficult to see whether some tribal households are more dependent on this source of income than others, particularly in areas where settled cultivation is predominant. Among the sample households there are some which are classified as 'non-cultivating' households. The author does not elaborate as to where such households derive their income from.

The data also indicate that settled cultivators derive around twice as much income as Jhum cultivators (p. 121). While all households are shown to market some proportion of output, households engaged in settled cultivation in each land size category market a higher percentage of what they produce. Further, Table 5.6 shows that while paddy and maize are grown mainly for home consumption, 'non-food' items like fruits, jute, etc., are produced entirely for the market. It is thus more than likely that some tribal households have been able to respond to and take advantage of the growing demand for products such as fruits, arecanut and even potatoes which, as a result, are grown primarily for the market. Those who have been able to bring additional lands under permanent cultivation have possibly benefitted most in this respect. Commercialisation and markets in this manner have probably played a more important role in the transition from shifting to settled cultivation than suggested by the study. Nair observes that a major constraint in this process of change is the shortage of labour. Hiring of wage labour and thereby bringing an

increasing amount of land under permanent cultivation is probably a significant feature of reinvestment of surplus income in agriculture in the tribal area

The transition from Jhum to settled cultivation is usually a slow process, with Jhum cultivators gradually bringing land under settled cultivation while continuing to meet their subsistence needs from shifting cultivation³ (This probably explains why government schemes which attempt to abruptly resettle Jhumias often do not succeed) Hence households that are presently engaged in both Jhum and settled cultivation are likely to best represent the dynamics of decision making in situations of change and transition. It is unfortunate that the author has ignored 81 sample households that are engaged in both types of cultivation. Of the remaining households, 294 are engaged in settled cultivation while 100 are Jhumias. One is not clear as to how many of the former were originally dependent on shifting cultivation and how many have always been engaged in permanent or settled cultivation. The study of change hence becomes problematic.

Notwithstanding a few lacunae which are the result mainly of constraints imposed upon a researcher by a project-oriented, large-scale study, the book remains an important contribution to our understanding of the tribal situation in Meghalaya. The data that has been generated can be fruitfully used by students with a research interest in continuity and change among the tribes. The conclusions drawn by the author and the possible alternatives he suggests, for instance, production on cooperatives lines in the tribal area, have important implications for tribal development policy and merit serious study.

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BOOK REVIEW

A New Look at Political Economy

UGO PAGANO, *Work and Welfare in Economic Theory*, Basil Blackwell, 1985

Taking as a starting point the relationship between work and welfare as conceptualised in economic theory, Ugo Pagano's excellent book branches off into a discussion of various aspects of political economy. Two broad themes, relatively unexplored in the literature, but nevertheless important for economic theory, emerge from his analysis: (i) The concept of the nature and division of labour, (ii) the different mechanisms for coordination of economic activity.

The relationship between these two themes is examined in the case of Adam Smith's celebrated example of the pin-making factory which he uses to argue that the market coordinates the division of labour in society, which in turn increases job-specific skills, and induces high levels of productivity. Pagano disputes the fact that coordination of labour in a pin-making factory, or for that matter in any factory, is conditional upon the market. He quotes extensively from the literature to show that Arrow's criticism of Smith for not being aware of the fact that interaction and cooperation can be achieved independently or exchange, was anticipated in the nineteenth century by Gioia, Babbage and Ure and later taken up systematically by Marx. These writers argued that coordination or activity in the labour-process occurs within the firm, is hierarchically structured and almost always precedes exchange.

According to Pagano, not only was Smith mistaken about how the coordination or division of labour was achieved, but he also had a defective understanding of why the division of labour increased productivity. He quotes from Babbage and Ure to show that the crucial implication of an extensive division of labour is not an improvement in job-specific skills, but the inducement of a process of de-skilling at the bottom of the hierarchy, where the production process requires general skills such as the ability to coordinate bodily movements in a particular way. This entire process increases the productivity of labour not by enhancing job-specific skills, but by disciplining and

homogenising labour, with disastrous consequences for labour-related welfare

This analysis of the nature of labour, in turn, leads to an examination of the controversies in the labour theory of value. In my opinion, an important aspect of Pagano's book is his emphasis on the differences between the theories of Smith, Ricardo and Marx. There is often a tendency to represent classical political economy as a linear development of the labour theory of value, which accordingly emerged in a crude form with Smith, was systematised by Ricardo, and culminated in a sophisticated version with Marx. It is undoubtedly true that a common tradition of classical political economy does exist, but the communality has often been over-stressed, to the exclusion of some very important differences between Smith, Ricardo and Marx.

Pagano's work is important because he does not stop short at distinguishing the well-known fact that Marx, unlike Smith and Ricardo, had a concept of the mode of production. Instead, he roots the differences between these writers in the way in which each of them visualised the nature of labour. According to Pagano, while Smith was unclear about certain aspects relating to the division of labour, he was nevertheless very perceptive about the implications of types of division of labour for the welfare of the worker. For Smith, labour in general is non-homogenous because certain activities are profoundly disagreeable or alienating. His shift from the labour-embodied theory of value to the labour-commanded theory of value was because of his acute awareness of the non-homogeneity of labour, which could not be captured by the labour-embodied theory of value.

On the other hand, according to Pagano, Ricardo ignores the fact that different types of activities are differently agreeable to the workers, and that disagreeableness is a fundamental element in defining labour itself. The only non-homogeneity that Ricardo is willing to concede is skill differences, and this makes possible the reduction of skilled labour to abstract unskilled labour. While this makes an application of the labour-embodied theory of value possible, Pagano argues that the Ricardian analysis is very limited in its approach, for it assumes that the workers derive welfare only from consumption goods and are indifferent to the allocation of their labour-power among different activities.

Pagano argues that for Marx, the assumption of homogenous labour is in general not justifiable as a characteristic defining labour. However, Marx argues that such an assumption is a close approximation to reality under capitalism for two reasons. Firstly, it is possible to reduce labour of varying skills to abstract unskilled labour, as Ricardo had maintained. Secondly, and more importantly, for Marx the division of labour under capitalism is equally stultifying across activities, and it is this which justifies the assumption of homogenous labour. Pagano argues that this difference between Ricardo and Marx is crucial, because according to Marx, the general level of welfare of the worker is

conditioned not only by the goods he consumes, but also by the activity which he is forced to perform. Pagano points out that this theme of the relationship between work and welfare has repeatedly recurred in the history of economic thought. For instance, this debate figured in the controversies between Jevons and the Austrian school. However, this debate got subsumed in Walrasian general equilibrium models which treat labour as foregone leisure. In this formulation, labour is treated as any other consumption good and it affects the utility of the worker in exactly the same way as any other consumption good. The analysis of the nature of the labour-process is thus obfuscated.

Pagano tries to incorporate the implications of the nature of the labour-process into the Arrow-Debreu-Hahn general equilibrium models and arrives at interesting results. In Pagano's extended model, work is defined as a vector of tasks of different levels of agreeableness or disagreeableness. In traditional models, welfare is dependent only upon the set of goods the worker consumes and the leisure time available at his disposal, the profit-maximising output is also welfare-maximising. However, in Pagano's model, welfare is also dependent upon the specific tasks a worker has to do, thereby precluding de-skilling and authoritarian allocation of labour in the production process. If this happens, an enterprise is unable to organise activity in a way which maximises profit. That is, the welfare-maximising output is not necessarily profit-maximising. Thus, welfare-maximising results of general equilibrium theory are conditional upon abstracting from the nature of the labour-process.

The other theme which Pagano examines systematically is the analysis of the various methods for coordinating economic activity. He shows that Marx, for instance, was aware that there are two distinctive types of coordination under capitalism, namely, market-type coordination and firm-type coordination, the former is *ex poste* in nature, and the latter is characterised by its *ex-ante* nature. As capitalism develops, Marx believed that market-type coordination will be increasingly replaced by firm-type coordination. It is from this process that Marx develops, according to Pagano, a concept of 'single-firm socialism' where the coordination of the market is completely replaced by an *ex-ante* planning process.

Pagano argues that while Marx was acutely aware of the social costs of market-type coordination, he tended to underestimate the costs of firm-type coordination which requires enormous informational flows and a bureaucratic structure. However, for Marx this concept of 'single-firm socialism' is transitional, in the sense that the nature of labour under such a system is yet to be transformed. Labour under such a system continues to be a homogenous pain (which is the reason why the law of value continues to operate under socialism) and the organisational structures of socialism are directed at enhancing production rather than attempting to change the nature of labour itself. For Marx, the transformation of the nature of labour occurs only under communism.

Pagano has an interesting discussion of why he believes there is no smooth transition from 'single-firm socialism' to what he calls 'anti-firm communism'

Pagano provides an extensive review of the literature on the theme of the mechanisms for the coordination of economic activity, especially in relation to socialist economies. He points out certain major fallacies which are encountered in discussions of this literature. The Walrasian system of the 'auctioneer-economy' is shown to theoretically approximate a planned economy, while the Lange system of planning is shown to possess essential features of market coordination. The informational and organisational costs of the Walrasian and Lange systems are analysed in the context of recent planning models and the case for decentralisation of economic activity is also examined.

Most books on political economy focus either on the theory of value or crisis theory. Pagano's book is a refreshing change, it examines equally important, but much ignored areas of economic and social activity.

R RAMANA
Research Scholar, Cambridge University

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Ground Rent and Socialism: Experience of the USSR and East European Socialist Economies K.K. Dasgupta	3
Akbar Allahabadi and National Politics Iqbal Husain	29
Raymond Williams and the English Novel Asha S. Kanwar	46
Discussion: 'Indian Sociology': A Rejoinder Anjan Ghosh	59
Review Article: State Intervention and Industrial Change: Towards a Synthesis C.P. Chandrasekhar	61

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1 A Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977

2 See R. Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', *Journal of Comparative Economics* December 1979, pp 325-45

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Editorial Note

A story, no doubt apocryphal, is told of how Marx, when asked once to specify in somewhat greater detail how a socialist economy would function, blew a smoke-ring into the air, watched it dissolve, and remarked. 'I can see thus far and no further' He did occasionally of course overcome his reticence, as, for instance, when he wrote *A Critique of the Gotha Programme*. But, on the whole, the reticence prevailed. One result of it has been that economists in socialist countries have, over the years, laboured painfully and *ab ovo* to find answers to theoretical problems of socialist construction and management without the guiding hand of Marx. To be sure, even if Marx had been less reticent, debates and disagreements among socialist economists, whether *im Grossen* or *im Kleinen*, would have continued. That is as it should be, but the debates could have straightaway begun perhaps from a more meaningful level.

There was the famous discussion, spread over many years, on the scope and applicability of the law of value under socialism. As the lead article in the current number of *Social Scientist* makes clear, there has been an equally fascinating and prolonged debate on the theory of rent under socialism. This debate too, which began by asking basic questions such as whether ground-rent as a category can at all exist under socialism, moved on, by the sixties, to a discussion of complex theoretical issues underlying real-life practical problems.

A number of issues came to the fore. First, in so far as in agriculture and extractive activities, different enterprises incurred different unit costs of production on account of natural and vocational factors, how should the outputs be priced so as to avoid a systematic discrimination in favour of the better-endowed enterprises? Secondly, if, notwithstanding the pricing rule, the better-endowed enterprises continued to enjoy an advantage unrelated to the specific quality of their performance, what kind of fiscal and other means could be adopted to nullify this undeserved advantage? Thirdly, when there are different modes of land ownership in agriculture, e.g., State ownership, collective ownership and individual ownership, what additional considerations does this particular factor introduce into the entire question of evaluating and fixing ground-rents? Fourthly, does

the difference between agriculture and extractive industries, the operations in both of which are circumscribed to a large extent by natural factors, but one of which is dealing in principle with 'exhaustible resources', make a difference to the application of the theory of ground-rent in the two cases? Fifthly, since enterprise-level rationality in decision making requires an evaluation of land which can be put to attractive uses, how is this value of land to be arrived at in an economy where land is not a commodity bought and sold freely on the market?

The views of a host of writers grappling with these and other such vexed questions are surveyed in Professor Dasgupta's article. Any such survey of course can be no more than just an introduction, which those interested in pursuing the subject further can then follow up. But, such an introduction is invaluable not only for those who, for obvious reasons, are interested in the theory and practice of socialism, but indeed for all, since many of these problems appear, in a transmuted form, also in an economy like ours with a different social system.

Akbar Allahabadi was a curious phenomenon in the world of Urdu poetry. The wit and satire which marked his poetry was in refreshing contrast to the melancholy tenor that characterized the writings of many of his contemporaries. But, as the paper by Iqbal Husain highlights, he was also imbued with a strong sense of anti-imperialism. Despite his apparent conservatism in sticking to old-world ways and beliefs, he was remarkably perspicacious about the nature of imperialist rule, about imperialist interest in maintaining the communal divide in the country and about the need for unified struggle against imperialism. In this respect, he not only differed from, but sharply attacked those Muslim leaders who, while being apparently 'Westernized', actually soft-pedalled anti-imperialist sentiments.

Literary critic, sociologist, even a creative writer and political activist, Raymond Williams who passed away recently was a major figure of the British Left. Asha Kanwar, in providing a critical appreciation of Williams' work on the English novel, locates him within a 'socialist-humanist' tradition which has come to occupy a prominent place in British radical thought, and of which Williams was both an inheritor as well as perhaps the most powerful contemporary exponent.

Corrigendum In Ashok Mitra's article titled 'Disproportionality and the Services Sector' in Issue No. 179, the second sentence of the last paragraph on page 6 should read as follows: This expansion in the government sector has little causal relationship with developments in either agriculture or industry. The error is regretted.

K K DASGUPTA*

Ground Rent and Socialism: Experience of the USSR and East European Socialist Economies

The purpose of this paper is to examine the issue of rent relations in socialist economies with particular reference to the Soviet Union and East European countries. Over a long period of time, starting with the great economic debate of the 1920s, the question of ground rent has attracted the attention of economists, planners and intellectuals, initially of the Soviet Union and later of the other European socialist countries as well.

In these discussions, the framework for an understanding of rent relations was provided by the Marxian theory of ground rent elaborated in Vol III of *Capital* and in *The Theories of Surplus Value*. Like a number of other theories of Marx, for example, value theory and production price theory, the theory of ground rent, based on capitalist property relations in land and originally aimed at analysing the dynamics of capitalist development, was sought to be utilized for furthering the process of planned development by identifying supra-institutional components in the theory which were admissible under socialism.

In what follows, the debate centering around the validity of rent relations in socialism has been presented in its historical context, with emphasis on the arguments that were put forth by important economists like Strumilin, Markov, Pashkov, Nemchinov, Fedorenko and others. Further, the present state of the debate is delineated and the practical problems associated with rent relations under socialism have been identified.

THREE PHASES OF THE SOVIET DEBATE

In 1918 itself, the validity of the theory of ground rent under socialism emerged as an important issue, leading up to three rounds of discussion. In the first round, which took place between 1924 and 1926, the main emphasis was on whether differential rent existed under socialism or not. One of the issues at this stage was that of determining the path and nature of emergence of ground rent in agricultural production if it

was accepted that rent as an economic category was in existence under socialism. For a proper interpretation of the then socialist reality, the basic tenets of Marx's theory of rent were thoroughly examined and the methodological issues for identifying and quantifying the quantum of rent were discussed, given the context of capitalist relations and small commodity production during the NEP period. The most important personality in this round was G. A. Studentski.¹ In the second stage of the discussion the principal characters initially were Smirnov and Vinogradov and their approach differed from that of the first phase because, by 1929, the Soviet Union was confronted with a different set of socio-economic conditions. In the first phase the emphasis was on rent arising out of small commodity production, whereas in 1929 the frame of reference was the possibility of generation of rent in the wake of complete collectivization.² The main task was to investigate whether, given the agrarian relations prevalent at that time, differential rent could arise. In the course of the discussion, L. Liubimov argued in 1930 that, even in the State sector of agricultural production rent could be generated. However, others like Ostrovityanov, who looked at the problem from the point of view of a socialist economy alone, could not accept this conclusion. In fact, despite continuing debate in the 1930s, the consensus that emerged was that rent did not exist under socialism because it was a specific manifestation of surplus value, which was a 'non-phenomenon' under socialism. It was also held that the issue of rent was not a problem under socialism and therefore there was no need for further research or investigation.³

The Third Phase

The third and most important phase of the debate stretched between 1958 and 1962, although the most important formulations came at the beginning of the 1960s. The significance of this round is augmented because it was in that period that the entire question of the efficacy of the 'Centralized Command Model' of planning was being raised seriously and the need for sweeping economic reforms advocated. One of the most important participants in the debate was the celebrated economist Strumilin. First, he echoed the unanimous opinion of the socialist economists that 'absolute rent' cannot exist in socialism. With regard to differential rent, he argued that, 'In the Soviet conditions, with the removal of private property on land and other means of production, the law of the equalizing rate of profit falls through and along with it the entire basis for the formation of land rent disappears. With the abandonment of the law of equal norms of profit, the very foundation on which it arose, disappears'.⁴ He in fact affirms that

Because of the absence of exploitation of labour in conditions of socialism, all the elements of surplus value are eliminated including the rent on land. Differential profitability of various plots of land are preserved but not differential rents because the prices on the

average, of all the plots under cultivation, are formed according to the law of value, that is, their deviations from individual expenditure of labour on different plots are compensated⁵

It is an extremely interesting argument because from the point of view of Marxian rent theory the absence of the conditions for the generation of surplus value also calls for the rejection of the concept of rent

Differential Rent and Ownership

But the issue was not that simple to resolve. In the then prevalent Soviet system of agriculture both the *Sovkhoz* and *Kolkhoz* had importance. In view of the existence of these two types of ownership in agriculture, Pashkov, an eminent economist in his own right, held that differential rent exists under socialism not because of shortage of fertile land but because of the existence of two types of farming, that is, State and collective. In response to this contention, Strumilin posed a pertinent question: What would happen if the collective farms are integrated into one economic unit and rendered national property? Pashkov answered that in such an eventuality differential rent would disappear.⁶ From this question and answer it is evident that one is denying the possibility of existence of ground rent and the other affirming its conditional existence. These two influential opinions were further supported on either side by a number of other economists.

The argument of I. Markov in this debate is in line with that of Strumilin. He held the opinion that the difference in incomes between collective farms due to favourable conditions, including a higher degree of fertility due to application of labour, should be treated as additional income. This is similar to differential rent in appearance, but different from differential rents under capitalism because these are not due to what Marx termed 'false social value', which is only possible in conditions conducive to the creation of surplus value.⁷ In this connection Markov makes an important theoretical observation. He says that differential incomes of collective farms are additional incomes but all additional incomes of these farms are not differential incomes. Additional incomes could be obtained as a result of utilization of special characteristics of land, additional outlay of labour and material means on the land under cultivation, sale of a greater volume of produce of the farm in the *Kolkhoz* market and considerable improvement of the organization of production. Under such conditions the additional income generated cannot be treated as differential income because any specific characteristic of land is not utilized for generation of this income.⁸ Thus the concept of rent can only be used in capitalism, while under socialism, only additional or differential income is possible. What Markov did not mention is that with the intensification of agriculture the additional income generated resembles the differential rent type II. Could we therefore treat it as

differential income of type II which is additional income without exploiting the specific features of land in production?

V. Nemchinov, a proponent of the theory that differential rent does exist under socialism, posits the issue in terms of the logic of price formation under socialism. According to Nemchinov,

during planning of profitability of individual enterprises, there is great importance attached to how the fixed and the circulating capital are related to it. Some economists who are supporters of production price correctly suggest the determination of the profit rate as a percentage of fixed and circulating capital and not on prime cost. However, they are not correct in their contention that the problem of profitability of socialist enterprises coincides fully with that of economic efficiency of outlay of capital. In our conditions in the course of planning, necessity arises for fulfilment of two indicators: normative economic efficiency of fixed and circulating capital and differential rent.⁹

While elaborating the issue of differential rent in this connection, Nemchinov adds that as opposed to capitalism, there is no sale or turnover of land or mining properties under socialism. As a result, some economists are of the opinion that since these are the necessary conditions for generation of differential rent under capitalism, the absence of these under socialism calls for assuming away the existence of rent. Nemchinov does not agree with this view, as in socialism more favourable natural conditions give rise to surplus product relative to the average condition as a result of the outlay of the same quantum of labour in a particular sphere. However, the second reason for emergence of rent due to deviation from production price could be eliminated by correcting the production price. This could be done by fixing a unique normative profitability relative to fixed and circulating capital which would provide the economic corrective.¹⁰

Other Proponents

There are some other theoreticians who agree that differential rent does exist in socialism. In an article in the journal, *Sovetskaya nauka* at the beginning of the third round of debate in 1958, I. Kozodov wrote that the ownership of land, which is the principal means of production in agriculture in socialism, is of various kinds, including collectives and *edínolichniki*. This variation in ownership type is the principal reason for the existence of differential rent in socialism. This argument was contested by another economist of the same camp. According to I. Balanchivadze

It seems to us that the cause of existence of differential rent in socialist society is the monopoly on land as an economic object due to scarcity of land. But as opposed to capitalism, the monopoly of land

as an economic object in socialism does not lead to the determination of prices of agricultural products on the basis of productive outlay on inferior lands. In USSR, these prices are determined by the social outlay on production. The difference between the individual and social outlay on production (individual and social values) constitutes the surplus net income. However, in order that the surplus net income acquired the form of differential rent, commodity production and the law of value must exist. So, the cause of existence of differential rent in socialism is monopoly on land as an economic object, and its basis—commodity production and law of value.¹¹

Needless to say, factors of the kind referred to by both Kozodov and Balanchivadze are significant in determining rent under socialism and it would be inadequate to accept one as being of greater relevance than the other. The main conclusion that could be drawn from this stage of the debate is that gradually the view that the Marxian theory of Groundrent was inadmissible under socialism was being replaced by a genuine attempt at understanding the elements of that rent theory which had some supra-institutional characteristics.

The German Debate

It may be mentioned that this round of the discussion was the most comprehensive and many of the issues raised acquired tremendous significance in the management and planning of socialist economies in the post-reform period. In fact, the conclusion on the basis of which planned programmes were formulated was that differential ground rent was a real category in socialism. The debate was not confined to the Soviet Union alone. In other socialist countries in Eastern Europe as well many important issues were discussed on the subject. In GDR, in his thesis entitled, *Die Grundrente und ihre Wirkungsweise in der Landwirtschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, Schmidt argued in 1956 that '(a) rent relations were in existence in private and cooperative production, (b) the formation of social value was on the basis of relatively unfavourable natural conditions of production, and (c) the utilization of differential rent was of importance in the management and planning of agricultural production'.¹² In fact, the points made by the author were discussed later in the Soviet Union. Whereas the debate on ground rent was most vigorous between 1960 and 1962 in the Soviet Union, the corresponding period in GDR was 1964-1966. But economists in the GDR repeatedly emphasized the fact that the debate was not only instrumental in building a theoretical standpoint but also a reservoir of knowledge (*Erkenntnisreservoir*) for the solution of the problem of ground rent in GDR. As a result of the discussions in that country three distinct lines of thought emerged. The first position was taken by Luft, who suggested that the price of agricultural products should be uniform and be fixed on the basis of

average cost incurred in places with unfavourable conditions. The differential rents emerging from this process of price fixation should be taken away by taxes of up to 45 per cent of the additional income of the best farms. He was of the opinion that this tax would take care of differential rent type I. Also, he suggested that the tax should not be so high as to take away the differential rent of type II, but should only amount to a part of differential rent type I.¹³ H. Anders, on the other hand, came out with the suggestion that the price of an agricultural product should be fixed on the basis of the average cost of all enterprises (LPG). In this way the deviation of costs of individual enterprises from the normative thus fixed on the basis of average could be treated as positive and negative rent income and as such could be tackled with a tax or subsidy as the case may be.¹⁴ The third line of argument was advanced by G. Schmidt. She recommended the setting up of zonal prices. Against this suggestion, it was argued that GDR being a very small country, the price zones would also be very small and hence ineffective.¹⁵

THE POST-REFORM PERIOD

In the post-reform period the main issues centering around ground rent were the valuation of natural resources, elimination of additional profit due to favourable natural conditions in which a rational price structure of agricultural produce played the most important part and the payment for use of land to the State. In addition there were some minor issues like receiving payment for land given to the collective farms as in Hungary, and the nature of rent relations in Poland condition private farming dominated. The theoretical debate on ground rent after the reform is on how it emerges, what is its contribution to the development of the economy through redistribution and the methodology of fixing values of rents in particular situations.

One of the methods by which the additional income due to rent in the profit of agricultural farms is taken away is by imposition of a tax on capital on favourably located agricultural enterprises. The case for this tax is that farms with locational advantages also enjoy the advantage of favourable prime cost. Therefore, the purpose of the tax is to introduce an element of symmetry with regard to *khovraschet* among competing agricultural farms. Thus, after the reform, the planners sought to incorporate the bounty or gift of nature in the calculation of the prime cost of enterprises to a 'sufficient' degree, since it was held that what remains with the enterprise (collective farm) after taxation was adequate for its efficient functioning. In this connection, Strumilin raised the question as to the criterion by which the magnitude of a sufficient bounty would be determined. If the value of this bounty is determined outside the ambit or requirement of the law of value, then this augments the price once rent is regarded as a due to gift of nature. So, prices in the given circumstances do not reflect law of value even in a condition of commodity-money relationship but are something

arbitrary; to treat water or air in free state as a gift of nature is one thing, but to do the same with natural resources utilized for production is another. 'The economic interests only represent the already mastered and assimilated gifts of nature. And these prices are completely determined by the social value of the outlay for mastering the bounty (of nature)', he adds.¹⁶ Therefore, it was necessary to formulate a method of determining the value of the bounty which enters into the prime cost of production which keeps in view the price normative as an indicator. The price normative in turn also reflects, with certain limitations, the law of value. In the opinion of Strumilin, on the morrow of the reform there was need to make serious efforts to derive a method for evaluating the natural resources employed in production.

The Ambit of Rent

For some time it was believed that rent relations are only in existence in extractive industries and agriculture under socialism. But according to one economist, the 'influence of the rent factor is not limited to the sphere of extractive industry and agriculture. Automatically, through the mechanism of price and distribution of net income of the society, this influence plays a wider role in determining the national economic proportions and the tempo of growth of production as a whole'.¹⁷ The author also holds the view that

. . . rent relations under socialism were examined and studied only from a general methodological stand-point. The main attention was attached to the study of the essence and source of formation of differential rent, general principles of its distribution and so on. Very little study was made of the concrete forms of realization of these relations.¹⁸

Kassirov raised a number of important issues. He pointed out that even in the mid-1970s, when his article was published, the only method regarded as effective in tackling income differentials due to the presence of rent relations was the setting of differential wholesale or purchase prices fixed regionally. But this did not meet the basic problem. As long as an economic evaluation of natural resources, primarily of land, is not made, this method is purely empirical in character. So while Strumilin held that taxation is not an adequate method, Kassirov found differential prices unsatisfactory.

A Requirement for Planning

One might recall the charge of empiricism and voluntarism brought against the planners regarding the fixation of prices of industry in the pre-reform days during the discussions on reform. There is a similarity in the assertions of Kassirov and Strumilin. In the opinion of the former, the measures of that time related to redistribution of accumulation in particular, with emphasis on efficiency of only part of

the productive resources of society. These measures, which were successful, were addressed to problems in spheres not characterized by rent relations. In spheres like extractive industry, agriculture, forestry and other sectors which are characterized by extraction of rent, the problems still remained to be solved.¹⁹ The long-term goal was therefore that of deriving a methodology for calculating rents in the given system of economic management of society. The first step towards this goal required the formulation of a method for calculating the rents of natural resources like land, oil, water and so on, including that of land used by extractive industries. The author demonstrated how with the inclusion of values of natural resources, the values of indicators of efficiency in the national economy change appreciably. As is evident from Table 1, with the inclusion of values of natural resources, in extractive industries and agriculture the situation changes considerably. This is not true in the case of manufacturing or of industry as a whole. As is evident from the table, profitability of manufacturing industry in this case has remained unchanged. The valuation of natural resources leads to a decrease in profitability of the first two, that is, extractive industry and agriculture, whereas the effect is noticeably different in the case of manufacturing and other industries. The author concludes,

If the decisive realization of the principle of efficiency of capital in prices is taken into consideration, then the exclusion of a significant part of capital (natural resources) does not allow the realization of this principle successfully. In reality, if the natural factor is ignored, then profitability of the manufacturing and extractive sectors differs insignificantly. Its inclusion in the determination of the real rate of profit shows that the extractive industries, per unit of resource utilized, receive through the wholesale prices, four times less profit than the manufacturing sector and consequently are in a much worse condition from the point of view of ensuring expanded reproduction.²⁰

On the other hand we come across an opinion which after examining the nature of emergence of rent in oil extraction, suggests that such rent should be properly redistributed. Redistribution involves the transfer of income due to rent to the budget and subsequent division, because the nature of income of enterprises greatly affects their *khozraschet* position. In the case of some enterprises or *obyedinenie*, the conditions of production may give rise to losses. But it has to be remembered that the product (petroleum) is used in different sectors as inputs. So, the loss due to unfavourable conditions of production at one site should be compensated by the gain due to opposite locational and other conditions elsewhere which give rise to differential rent. Redistribution of rent could be effected at two levels (a) at the social scale which could be done by the government as a conscious macro-economic policy, and (b) at the sectoral level, again by suitable

Table 1 Influence of the inclusion of the rent factor (valuation of natural resources) on economic indicators in the basic sectors of the national economy (as per data of 1970) (Million roubles)

	Industry		Agriculture (Socialised Sector)	Industry and agriculture		
	Total	Sector wise		Total	Extractive Industry and agriculture	
		Manufacturing				Mining
Value of basic productive assets and material working means	259823	204892	54931	108909	368732	163840
Cost of Production	282523	247159	35364	50099	323219	85463
Profit	55956	45856	10100	12543	68499	22643
Profitability %	21.5	22.4	18.4	11.5	18.6	13.8
Cost of natural resources in value terms	132500	—	132500	156500	289000	289000
Total value of utilizable resources	392323	204892	187431	265409	657732	452840
Level of profitability with utilisation of natural resources %	14.3	22.4	5.4	4.7	10.4	5.0
Profit in absolute terms calculated from national economic profitability in each sector including value of natural resources	40865	21342	19523	27634	68499	47157
The resulting magnitudes of increase(+) and decrease(—) of sectorwise profit	—15091	—24514	+9423	+15091	—	+24514
Value of gross product	323388	268501	54887	77733	401121	132620
Specific weight of sectors in the value of gross product industry	100	83.0	17.0	—	—	—
Industry and agriculture	80.6	66.9	13.7	19.4	100.0	33.1

Source Kassirov L, Rentrnye otnosheniya I rezul'taty ekonomicheskikh metodov khoziaistvovaniya, ekonomicheskienauki, 1974-75, p 58

government action. According to one author, in a condition of increasing application of higher technology in the petroleum industry the level of productivity improves. At the same time the differentiation in the conditions of production does not cease to exist. In these conditions, a uniform price for the product for the country as a whole results in differential rent,²¹ which needs redistribution sectorally.

Available Instruments

Coming back to the reaction of economists in the Soviet Union to the instruments used for eliminating differential rents, especially in agriculture, it may be noted that there were three basic instruments for this purpose: (a) the turnover tax which takes away a substantial part of the difference between the level of wholesale and retail prices, with the former including purchase prices, (b) zonal differentiation of purchase (delivery) prices which are used for transmitting to the budget the amount that is generated as differential rent I, and (c) profit tax on net income of State farms and income tax on the same in case of individual farming. In the 1970s there were some sharp criticisms regarding the efficacy of these instruments. According to one author,

The first two forms lack precise quantitative demarcation, since the transfer of the differential rent is made not directly (depending on the quality and quantity of the land that a given enterprise has at its disposal) but is made indirectly—per unit of product sold. In turn, the latter not only makes it impossible to make an accurate calculation of the proportions in the transfer to the budget of part of the surplus product that is created and of all the excess surplus product (differential rent I), but also impedes the stimulation of the more effective specialization and intensification of agricultural production. Moreover, the insufficient substantiation of the amount of rent that is levied determines the unequal opportunity for the expanded reproduction of agricultural enterprises in different natural economic zones. For this reason, the clear-cut differentiation and determination of the two basic forms of transmitting part of the net income of collective and State farms—turnover tax and rent payments—to the centralized fund is a paramount task in improving the distribution mechanism.²²

This was Kassirov's view in the early 1970s. What he pointed to was the government's inability to differentiate between income that had to be taxed irrespective of the conditions of production on the one hand, and measures that had to be taken to eliminate undesirable rent incomes, on the other. The author was also critical of the existence of unequal conditions for enterprises, in spite of the claim of implementation of adequate measures for removing this. He adds, "The current system of rent payments in the differentiation of zonal prices

does not sufficiently promote the fulfilment of the task of creating increasingly equal conditions for the operation of enterprises'²³ A noted western economist of socialist agriculture expressed a similar view. According to him,

It has been generally recognized, and in recent times openly admitted in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, that an assessment of the differential land value (Marxian differential rent I) is necessary in socialised agriculture too, if uneconomic allocation of this factor of production is to be avoided. As land in those systems may not be purchased or sold (with a few minor exceptions), and therefore has no market value, other ways have been sought to assess its economic value, without convincing success so far. Taxes, levies and subsidies are used as a substitute in order to make up for advantages or disadvantages of different land quality or location. Soviet zonal prices are merely another approach to the same basic problem. On-going experiments, which in the Baltic Republics have already gone beyond the experimental stage, further differentiated the Soviet zonal prices down not only to districts but also to groups of farms, in order to levy the differential (not the absolute) land rent. As yet, the issue has not been solved in a way applicable for the whole USSR.²⁴

Payment for Natural Resources

Even as the debate on valuation of natural resources on proper economic grounds has been going on, in which interesting methodological issues have come to the fore, the practice of payment of natural resources is in existence in European socialist countries. In many cases there are indirect payments and in some these are direct. In GDR, for example, on January 1, 1968, for the first time, payment for use of land by the State farms among European CMEA countries was introduced. The amount was fixed as a percentage of the value of the land (which was computed) and this was taken as a charge from the profit earned by the VEG (*Volkseigener Guter*), that is, State farms. The valuation of land was dependent on relative fertility. Therefore it was higher in case of more fertile lands and less in opposite cases.²⁵ In order to ensure equalizing *khozraschet* conditions including the provision of incentives to certain cooperatives, cooperative farms were classified into three groups. The classification was based on degree of socialization of the means of production in the cooperatives. Those cooperatives where the degree of socialisation was complete were designated as type III, and those with minimum degree of socialization were categorized as type I and in between came type II. From the very beginning of 1971, payment according to 'economic strength' was introduced simultaneously in all the three types of cooperatives, the main purpose of which was to eliminate differential advantages. Originally this principle was applied in VEGs only.²⁶ The charge on land in LPGs (cooperatives) and VEGs is not strictly the effect of valuation of natural resources of which

land is an extremely important component, although some sort of valuation took place on the basis of degree of socialization of means of production in these farms

On the Valuation of Natural Resources

On the question of valuation of natural resources, Feitel'man in USSR and Ahrends in GDR provided some extremely valuable insights. In the opinion of Feitel'man, all the methodological approaches for economic valuation of natural resources should unify two basic conceptions (a) valuation of natural resources be based on socially necessary expenditure of labour on these for preparation and assimilation for their exploitation in production, and (b) while imputing values on natural resources, capitalisation of differential rent should be the starting point.²⁷ Noted among those who advocated capitalisation of differential rents are T. Khachaturov and N. Fedorenko. This conception is based on the assumption that natural factors influence the level of productivity of labour. Therefore, utilization of natural resources in more favourable conditions could lead to generation of more surplus. According to Khachaturov, in respect of capitalisation of differential rent,

differential rent is an effect of utilization of resources of a higher quality, this effect is manifested in the increase of the productivity of labour. There is a significant similarity of this with more improved means of labour while applying, the effect obtained is also reflected in the improvement in the productivity of labour and this is identical to that which requires outlay of capital.²⁸

From this assumption Khachaturov proceeds to derive a simple formula for economic valuation of natural resources. After

knowing the effect obtained as a result of utilization of more favourable natural factors (differential rent - R), and conditionally taking this effect to be equal to a comparable effect as a result of utilization of more productive means of production which is regulated by the comparable efficiency of outlay of capital (E_n), one could tentatively determine the economic value of natural resources by the formula,

$$S = R/E_n \quad (1)$$

The calculation of differential rent is related to the identification of natural resources, characterized by inferior natural conditions, and the magnitude of necessary expenditure of productive resources which remain within the correct social limit of such expenditure for satisfaction of the requirement of the national economy. According to Feitel'man, this maximum allowable outlay (of resources) should be

determined not only for the country as a whole but for zones and subzones as well. Even in the case of several layers of deposits in mines, this should be determined taking into consideration the differences in natural conditions which necessitate differential outlays and the nature of the transport network which also is an element in this differentiation. Besides, the maximum allowable outlay on the given natural resources could be determined in conformity with the character of planned economic tasks for fulfilment of which these resources are utilized.²⁹ It may be mentioned that Feitel'man examined the extractive industries for determination of rent and suggested formulae for its calculation. Also, he was concerned with the role of marginal outlays in the production of extractive industries, where the marginal outlay or cost increases as the process enters from a higher layer of deposit to the next lower and so on. He suggests a method of determination of rent in extractive industry (annual average value = D_e) which is calculated by dividing total rent which would be obtained from the exploitation of a new layer of deposit by the total period that will be necessary to exhaust the layer. The assumption in this process for emergence of rent is the continuity of the existence of favourable conditions during the entire period of production from this deposit. The calculation is done according to the formula

$$R = R_T / T \quad (2)$$

and

$$R_T = \sum_{t=1}^T R_1 \quad (3)$$

in which R_T = total value of rent from productive activity in the mine which could be obtained from the layer of the deposit for the entire or the remaining period of its exploitation (in roubles), R_1 = the same rent in the '1'th year of operation of the layer, t = unit of the period for calculation of rent, from the year of introduction of the calculation ($t=1$) to the year of the completion of operation ($t=T$)³⁰ An important issue that came up in connection with the calculation of this rent according to the formula suggested was the role of the time element. It was argued by some that inclusion of time element for determination of R_T was necessary. However, Feitel'man does not agree with this proposal. He says, 'In our opinion, this leads to an artificial reduction of the magnitude of the annual average mine rent (R) in comparison with that obtained by evaluating other items of natural resources (for example, land), and consequently the magnitude of the value (also decreases).'³¹

Ahrends, on the other hand, while discussing the same issue is of the opinion that a constant income which is obtained regularly over a period of time in the case of extractive industries has differential

economic potential in successive years. The further the time in the matter of receiving income from the starting point of the calculation, the more is the deviation of the economic effect from the temporally optimum of these incomes. 'An equal total rent in years x and $x+5$ is not the same from the economic point of view. 400 Marks rent per hectare of land under cultivation absorbs greater economic potential than by the same amount five years later', Ahrends adds³²

For adjustment of the differing potential of incomes over a period of time, a discount rate has been suggested so as to equate economic potentials of income which includes the rent element. The formula³³ for calculation of compound interest, that is:

$$R = 1/(1+a)^t$$

In fact, in the Soviet Union also this method of discounting was suggested by a number of theoreticians. But the counter argument that has been put forth is that as far as extractive industries are concerned, exploitation and hence the duration of working of deposits are estimated in terms of decades, whereas discounting is done mainly for arriving at the decision whether an investment is feasible and practicable. In such cases only the short-term investments are taken into consideration. The discounting of total mine rent which extends over a long period reduces, in the opinion of Feitel'man, is the stimulus for maintaining better *khozraschet* of enterprises³⁴

This debate has been going on. In fact, immediately after the reform it was suggested by a Soviet economist that the mine rent should be discounted at a fixed rate of 5 per cent per annum. Of course, there was opposition within that country itself as has been pointed out. However, as far as the problem of discounting of economic potential in every year over a period of time is concerned, it has to be noted that reserves in mineral deposits are non-reproducible. Therefore, when these reserves are exhausted, the source of mine rent also vanishes. This is not true of agricultural land.

In spite of this observation, Feitel'man surprisingly says, 'However, it does not follow from this that it is necessary to utilize other methods of capitalisation of differential rent in the economic evaluation of minerals than that used in the economic evaluation of other natural resources (for example, land).'³⁵

Role of Prices

Ahrends, while examining the rent relation with respect to natural resources brings in price as an important category in this determination. In his opinion the planning of national economic development on the basis of absolute and relative scarcity of energy and raw materials is dependent on the prices associated with these in the production process. He says,

The price is not only an important element for economic accounting but also is a value category which embraces all the fundamental economic processes in socialist society. With the help of these prices the production tasks are planned, the performance of economic units are evaluated, the national economic proportions are determined and the targets and incentives are fixed.³⁶

Naturally, while pricing the natural resources the issue of rent becomes important.

While elaborating the economic content of evaluation of the rent of natural resources, Ahrends explicates the implications of the two conceptions of economic evaluation of natural resources in the discussion (a) the outlay conception and (b) the rent conception. In the case of the former, the socially necessary outlay for the utilization of particular natural resources becomes central in the determination of value. On the other hand, the rent conception rests on the economic effect of the utilization of particular natural resources. Along with this difference in conception, methodological questions regarding the issue are subjects of debate today.

The general basis for evaluation of the rent of natural resources is 'differential rent' because 'absolute rent' does not exist in socialism. 'The natural resources are evaluated on the bases of differential rent and (its) gross value represents the totality of the scarce live and congealed labour needed for utilization of natural resources at the social scale.'³⁷ This interpretation of differential rent arises from the fact that the difference between the socially necessary labour expenditure, A_{GN} , that is, the expenditure of labour under unfavourable natural conditions of production for satisfaction of a social need and the outlay for individual economic units, A_{WE} , is the differential rent, $A_{GN} - A_{WE}$.

The valuation or estimate of differential rent is based on the principle of maximization of differential rent, that is, the larger is the differential rent the more effective is the utilization of the evaluated resources for the socialist society.³⁸ In symbolic terms this relation could be represented as

$$\sum_{i=1}^n (A_{GN_i} - A_{WE_i}) - \max \quad (1)$$

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The practical application of this principle as the basis for economic valuation of natural resources is not free from complications. From the above relation it is evident that it is an *apparent* criterion of economic

efficiency of resources utilized, which emphasizes the minimization of the expenditure of labour before everything

According to Ahrends, some of the economists who are concerned with this question are of the opinion that minimization of outlay should be the basis for evaluation of natural resources³⁹ His own opinion is however interesting. He says

In the discussion on the fundamental principle of valuation of economic efficiency of utilization of nature, my opinion is often overlooked, that between minimization of outlay of raw materials and maximization of differential rent, there is a mutual interaction, that both these aspects are in one economic process. The more the differential rent increases in the opposite direction in relation to the outlay in producing enterprises under differing natural conditions, the less is the outlay of specific resources in individual economic units, (and) which changes the (magnitude of) differential rent in the opposite direction with increasing outlay of specific resources⁴⁰

As has been pointed out, as opposed to Feitel'man, Ahrends is in favour of discounting the flow of differential rent over a period of time. He, by including this aspect, suggests the following formula for valuation of differential rent

$$B = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (A_{GN_i} - A_{WE_i})}{a} \quad (2)$$

B = total value of differential rent,

A_{GN} = socially necessary labour expenditure per unit of raw material,

A_{WE} = individual expenditure of labour in economic units for production of a unit of raw material,

n = units of raw materials that have to be taken for production like ores, layers of deposits of minerals, land under cultivation and so on,

a = coefficient for discounting⁴¹ The general opinion is that estimation of rent implies that the gross value of utilization of relatively unfavourable resources which is regulated by the natural conditions of utilization of the socially necessary outlay for raw materials is equal to zero, i.e., $B = 0$. The critics of valuation of rent have argued that since the gross value of rent in certain circumstances is zero, it is not applicable in actual production⁴²

It has to be noted that the arguments of the critics rest on the assumption that natural resources before application have to be valued for rent determination. To this, Ahrends argues that to take the value of rent to be zero does not mean that the resources are taken as a free gift

of nature but the process of utilization of these resources entails outlay of labour and hence it is exclusively determined by the social factors influencing labour productivity. Therefore, while making the value of B zero, the consideration is that the natural conditions of production of these resources for the social utilization process have significance only in so far as these are relatively unfavourable and the labour spent on that is regarded as socially necessary. 'The relative economic effect of the resource is nil'⁴³

Ahrends' Arguments

A perusal of the arguments of Ahrends makes one feel that he is quite confused. Firstly, let us recall that the average price concept was rejected even if it was suggested by none other than Strumilin among others. Therefore the question of accepting the socially necessary labour outlay on inferior land or mines with unfavourable conditions became important. Obviously in such cases the outlay has to be higher. Ahrends defines differential rent based on the 'outlay conception' because in his A_{GN} which he considers to be the reflection of socially necessary outlay, there is an additional expenditure over the normative for the exploitation of unfavourable conditions of production. Secondly, this expenditure is real, and there is no imputation of value. To treat the difference between this and the normative for any micro unit as zero is operationally meaningless. However, Ahrends' critique of the critics of rent is valid. But, he, in the same breath is arguing that as long as A_{GN} is based on socially necessary expenditure the rent is nil because it is identified with relative economic effect. In this assertion, could not the issue of expenditure or outlay of labour or other productive resources be taken also as an element of economic effect? If so, as long as $B \neq 0$, there is an effect. Of course, Ahrends' arguments against treating natural resources as free are quite valid, but to treat two cases, one with an outlay of say x , and another with say $x+k$, as having the same effect, say E , does not lead to the conclusion that the rent element has been reduced to the value of zero. From the discussion above it appears that consideration and determination of rent from incomes constitutes a better approach.

It has been pointed out that payment for the use of land was introduced first in the GDR. While doing so, some valuation was made on the basis of the degree of socialization cooperatives. But strictly speaking, in the absence of purchase and sale of land due to the influence of factors of supply and demand in socialist countries, whatever values are imputed are basically administrative in nature. It is true that the State or society has monopoly on land instead of private individuals as in market economies and also that rent relations do exist in socialism but the value of land is not a contributing factor in most cases. As a result, when the issue of differential rent I is raised on the basis of either income or outlay, one opinion is that the value of

land should be taken as an element among others for comparison Khachaturov is quite explicit about it According to him,

The rational use of land in a unified agricultural complex required making comparative economic calculations of all elements of agricultural production Unfortunately, such calculations turn out to be incomplete because land—the basic means of production in agriculture, like other natural resources—does not have a price and is not reflected in estimated cost The withdrawal of a greater or lesser quantity of land does not influence the economic indicators of construction projects But the lack of the valuation of land distorts economic calculations of its effective use and the improvement of its quality ⁴⁴

He suggests a formula for calculation of value of land He argues, 'The valuation of land for the purpose of making calculations in comparison with other expenditure is possible on the bases of differential rent calculation with due regard to the quality of a plot of land and its location If differential rent R is known, then the price of land S will comprise R/E_H where E_H is the normative coefficient of effectiveness' ⁴⁵

This method of valuation of land, in spite of its apparent elegance has some technical problems Firstly, a normative coefficient of efficiency is based on cost, price and income, in which the value of land if there is any should be an important component If not, rent has to be defined as the differential income emerging from the use of the income normative by micro-units In the case of negative rent then, there cannot be any value of land, whether it is in the agricultural or other sectors of production But land does have a positive value Even if R is a ratio it could be negative Of course, it could be argued that in the case of negative rent, the value of land will be taken as zero Then the whole question of valuation of land acquires a subjective character

The GDR Experience

In the case of GDR, the valuation of land has been done based on a number of other considerations Firstly, a price for the use of land has been fixed, which quite high This payment for use of land came into effect from 1968 as has been pointed out earlier The payment to the State budget for use of land and forest was introduced in that year, the amount depending on size, quality and other characteristics The average price amounts to 2,00,000 Marks per hectare of arable land ⁴⁶ The price of this use was calculated on the basis of the value of the produce at today's level for 75 years It has to be noted that the high level of payment for use of land, which for all practical purposes appears as price, acts in the opinion of Kindler as a 'sanction function' ⁴⁷ In the discussion on valuation of land, the efficacy of this

function, along with the economic utilization of land in planning and management of the economy are emphasized for discussion. An important point that has come out in this discussion is that it is not only the duration for which the price should be determined but, in the process, the necessary outlay for reproduction should also be taken into consideration.

In agricultural enterprises in GDR which function under differing conditions, a tax rate was imposed in 1984 in line with that in other socialist countries of Europe to eliminate differential rent. Through a fixed rate, ranging from 20 to 600 Marks per hectare of land under cultivation, this tax level represents the social efficiency level of the utilization of land. The LPGs usually with higher intensity of utilization of land could generate more income for expanded reproduction, more profit and more material incentive for the members of the LPGs.⁴⁸ It has to be noted that the fixed tax, set within a range that permits LPGs to minimize differential rent I, is imposed taking into consideration the value of the land. Imposition of tax is not without a norm for determination of net surplus in agricultural enterprises. According to one opinion, the redistribution of the financial resources of the LPGs should be done on the basis of price fixation of agricultural products. While doing so, *the relatively unfavourable* and not the most unfavourable natural conditions should be the basis for determination of rent. Consequently, a number of LPGs and VEGs would not be able to contribute to the centralized net income of the State but would receive a subsidy fixed for the particular location.⁴⁹ The reader may recall that the question whether the relatively unfavourable or the most unfavourable location would be the basis for determination of rent or price (as in this case) has remained the most debatable point.

Table 2 is an illustration of the effect of agricultural prices on the level of realizable differential rent I. In the case of GDR, where the suggestion to introduce different zonal prices could not be accepted because of the smallness of the country, the calculation of the extent of differential profit and rent proved significant because the latter is dependent on the former and the policy for elimination of differential rent could only be made after ascertaining its value by location groups.

The contention that the relatively unfavourable natural conditions for production should be the basis for determination of rent is not without its critics even in the GDR. But in practice the market value of agricultural produce is determined on the basis of gross value of production of agricultural enterprises in *relatively unfavourable* conditions. The prices of agricultural commodities till now have been fixed at one-third above the cost incurred by enterprises operating in the worst conditions of production.⁵⁰ With this as the normative price, the enterprises in more advantageous location enjoy an additional surplus than can be obtained by mere efficiency alone. This additional surplus, or rather a part of it, which is due to the fixation of the price

Table 2 Illustration of working of crop prices at the level of realisable differential rent I

Location groups	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	X
Agricultural produce (dt/ha)	26	30	34.5	40	44	48	52	41
Prime cost (M/ha)	1534	1650	1725	1880	1848	2112	2080	1876
Prime cost (M/t)	540	550	500	470	420	440	400	458
Production assets (M/ha)	3750	3800	3850	3900	3950	4000	4050	3920
Production assets (M/t)	1442	1267	1116	975	898	833	779	956
Proceeds with one price of crop at 633 M/t (M/ha)	1646	1899	2184	2532	2785	3038	3292	2595
Differential product (M/ha)	—	253	538	886	1139	1392	1446	949
Profitability (percent)	3.0	6.5	11.9	16.7	23.7	23.2	29.9	18.3
of which								
Differential profit (percent)	—	3.5	8.9	13.7	20.7	20.2	26.9	15.3
Differential rent (do)	-7.0	-3.5	+1.9	+6.7	+13.7	+13.2	+19.9	+8.3
Estimate of tax/duty on resources	-263	-133	73	261	541	528	806	325

N.B. The social 'fund-referred' net income has been assumed to be 10%

Source Rita Kindler WW, *Zur ökonomischen Bodenbewertung in der Landwirtschaft der DDR—1985-89* p. 1344

normative on the basis indicated above, is differential rent I. The amount of differential rent of type II that is generated in agricultural enterprises in GDR by additional outlay of capital is allowed to remain within the enterprises as incentive for the members of the farm.⁵¹

The basic philosophy in the fixation of agricultural price is that, being remunerative, it increases the capacity of enterprises to improve their production with certain objectives in view. It is known that in the GDR, the agricultural enterprises, whether they are LPGs or VEGs, are run like industrial enterprises. While fixing the price of agricultural produce the logic of calculation of mark-up prices as in industry was utilized. As a result, the methodology of price formation in agriculture in GDR is similar to that in the industry.⁵²

The agricultural price that is in vogue is rather an extension of the principle of one price for the produce of all enterprises, which is formed by adding a profit mark-up satisfying an economic objective on costs incurred by enterprises in North D3 and D4 zones in GDR. These are the zones which could be designated as relatively unfavourable. It may be noted that before the reform, there was a dual price system and also compulsory delivery of agricultural goods to the State. The uniform price system was regarded as more in keeping with the requirements of the reform.⁵³

Taxation Taxation has been the method for reducing the extent of surplus of enterprises located in regions with favourable natural conditions. For both LPGs and VEGs there is a tax depending on the type of soil and other factors. The amount, depending on location factors, varies between 20 and 600 Marks per hectare. The tax on surplus per hectare is 17.5 per cent on 200 Marks and the same is 60 per cent on 2500 Marks and over.⁵⁴ As has been pointed out, there is an opinion in the GDR, or rather in European socialist countries in general, that rent calculation should be made on the basis of the value of marginal rent. But one of the important arguments advanced against this is that the profit of enterprises with better natural conditions of production will then have a more than admissible surplus, even assuming a part of it is differential rent I. Further, the amount of rent for redistribution would be *unnecessarily* high. In any case, the protection of enterprises in regions with the most unfavourable natural conditions is effected by subsidy and other instruments with the purpose of maintaining some form of economic parity between different types of agricultural enterprises.⁵⁵

In the Soviet Union, especially in the Baltic republics, the determination of differential rent was based on first ascertaining the variation in the incomes of farms due to zonal pricing and then eliminating the rent element by suitable measures. The methodology in practice in Estonia assumes that variation in the quantum of output in agriculture is due to both objective and subjective factors. The first refers to degrees of fertility of soil, the locational factors and the nature

Table 3 Differential Revenues of the Collective and State Farms of the Estonian SSR on a District-by-district Basis for 1980 (in Rubles per Hectare of Cultivated Land)

District	Profit from Agricultural Production		Kapsaluski district	Differential rent as compared with	
	Normative profits	Actual profits		For the republic	Average organizational revenue
Khaapsul	67	90	0	-60	+23
Khar'u	219	237	152	+92	+18
Khuuma	85	91	22	-42	-6
Iygeva	141	139	74	+14	-2
Kingisepp	87	84	20	-40	-3
Kokhtla-laeve	153	118	86	+26	-35
Paide	168	144	111	+41	-22
Pylva	119	123	52	-14	+4
Piarnu	98	127	31	-35	+29
Rakvere	183	277	116	+56	+94
Rapla	102	93	35	-25	-9
Tartu	113	82	46	-14	-31
Valga	104	91	37	-23	-13
Vil'andi	153	164	86	+26	+11
Vyru	113	109	46	-14	-4

* Cultivated land includes arable, crop land, and hayfields

Source M Bronshtein, 'The Equalization of Cost Accounting Conditions in Agriculture', *Problems of Economics*, June 1984, p 78

Table 4 Differential revenues of individual collective and state farms in the Estonian SSR for 1980 (in rubles per hectare of activated land)

Farm Nos	Profit from agricultural production		Differential rent revenue compared with republic average	Organizational revenue
	Normative	Actual		
1	-8	-5	-135	+3
2	-4	+69	-131	+73
3	-2	+110	-129	+112
4	+37	-100	-90	-137
5	+60	-16	-87	-76
6	+96	-10	-31	-106
7	+127	+18	0	-109
8	+174	+323	+47	+149
9	+190	+309	+63	+119
10	+210	+378	+83	+168
11	215	+420	+88	+205
12	+219	+170	+92	+49
13	+220	+422	+93	+202
14	+223	+84	+96	-139
15	+458	+382	+331	-76
16	+476	+593	+349	+117
17	+522	+286	+395	-236
18	+640	+797	+513	+157
19	+820	+451	+693	-369
20	+1099	+696	+972	-403

Source As in Table 3, p 79

of available labour and material resources. The subjective factor is mainly concerned with efficiency in management. Even if it is sometimes difficult to compartmentalize these two factors as exclusively objective or exclusively subjective, as there is an appreciable overlap between the two according to the author, 'the lack of clear distinction between the objective and subjective does not eliminate the need to identify the elements of both groups that are responsible for the quantitative differentiation of agricultural production'.⁵⁹

The method for determining differential rent in Estonia used regression and correlation analysis for first fixing the normative for net product or net revenue or profit under socially normal conditions of outlay of labour, material resources and exploitation of land. The socially normal condition was the average for a particular district. The difference between the actual net revenue of a particular agricultural enterprise and the normative of net revenue (profit) constitutes the amount of differential rent.

At the second stage, the difference indicated above becomes the basis of what is known as 'organizational revenue' which, in the opinion of Bronshtein, 'reflects in each individual case the extent to which existing objective factors are being used rationally'.⁶⁰ Tables 3 and 4 indicate the variability of net revenues and organizational revenues by district and by farm in Estonia. It has to be noted that there is a difference between the magnitudes of differential rent revenues and differential rents produced. The former arises as a difference between the average net income for the republic calculated on *khozraschet* basis with cost and mark-up and the average farm income at the given purchase price. The figures in Table 3 provide further explanation.

Other East European Experiences

As has been mentioned at the beginning of this section, most of the specific features of rent relations are in existence in other East European socialist countries apart from GDR. However, the question of generation of differential rent especially of type I from the cooperative sector in Hungary has received similar attention as in GDR or USSR. Whereas the cooperative or the collective farms in all these three countries are producer collectives, in Hungary it has been declared that 'cooperatives are personal and property partnership of the co-proprieters, the members, thus they are not enterprises belonging to the State'.⁶¹ The owners of land in Hungarian cooperatives are members and proprietors at the same time. In the past, there were two kinds of landowners: (a) those not belonging to cooperatives, and (b) members. According to the provisions of statutes governing the functioning of cooperatives both types of landowners were entitled to rent payment.

According to one author,

As regards the rent to be paid to the first and second categories of landowners, Hungarian legal terminology makes a clear distinction

that cannot be easily rendered in the English language in which both are designated as 'rent'. With some circumscription, one may say that landowners who are not members of the cooperative which uses their land receive what is called 'a charge on the use of land', whereas members of cooperatives are entitled to a 'ground rent' taken in the classical sense of the word.⁶²

During the seventies, absentee landlordism was abolished and along with it the 'charge on the use of land'. But the ground rent paid to members of the cooperatives is also a payment for the use of their land. This rent does not come under either type I or II of differential rent. Then how do we classify this? On the one hand, there cannot be any doubt that 'absolute' rent cannot exist in any form of socialism. But the ground rent paid to cooperative members has some similarity with absolute rent. Could it then be designated as 'semi-absolute rent'? According to the author quoted above, the aggregate value of this rent is only about 4 per cent of the total family income of members. Hence, according to him, 'its role is no more than symbolic'.⁶³

It could be argued that it is not the total value of the rent that is received by the family which is more important conceptually, but its nature. It may be noted that the distribution of gross income of a cooperative farm in Hungary takes place as follows: (1) the production costs of the farming cooperatives which includes the land rent, and (2) the net income which is utilized for meeting obligations to the State, creation of various funds including the sharing fund for paying the members for work performed.

Therefore, the land rent in the cost of agricultural production has nothing to do with the relative advantages of location, etc. It is *absolute* in character but not an *absolute rent* in the sense this is understood, because this rent is not received by the owners of land because of monopoly of ownership of land.

The Specific Case of Poland

In Poland with 75 per cent of agriculture in private hands, with differing sizes of holdings and variation in locational specificities, differential rent I is bound to emerge as an important phenomenon. But the point that deserves most attention in the light of the discussion in the paper is—what is the nature of ownership of land in Poland? Theoretically, the State owns the means of production, but a lion's share of use of land is in private hands. Therefore, there is neither a monopoly of the State on land nor that of private owners. Also, leasing out is not a very uncommon practice in Poland. If so, the payment by the lessee to the owner is a rent which looks more like absolute rent. There is also another interesting feature. Due to ageing and migration, many peasants with not many hands to assist them, surrendered their land to the State which ensured an old age pension and the right to keep houses and garden plots for these peasants. The question in this regard

is whether the payment by the State to these peasants could be regarded as rent? But old age pension in lieu of the means of earning livelihood cannot be, by any definition, regarded as rent of any type

From what has been presented above one could conclude that a very important feature of the capitalist system which Marx investigated and which for a long time was regarded as not admissible in socialist economic practice has been found to be of tremendous significance in this society. As is well known, this is not only true of Marxian theory of ground rent but also quite a number of other theories that have been successfully employed in socialist practice with suitable theoretical and practical modifications. In the USSR and East European countries, as has been indicated, differential rent I is eliminated by various methods aimed at creating equal *khozraschet* conditions and redistribution of surplus income. This rent income is received by the State because only it has the monopoly over landownership. This characteristic of State action under socialism does not make a socialist State a perpetuator of 'State landlordism'. This point needs emphasis because for reasons best known to them, some of the scholars on socialist economies in the West, especially concerned with the USSR and East European countries have branded the system as 'State capitalism' because they have invented or identified some definite similarities with capitalist economies. They have chosen their terms in such a way that, in the present historical context, no system could be designated as socialist. The inclusion of 'State landlordism' in the economic, or to be precise, ideological vocabulary of such scholars is not an impossibility.

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IQBAL HUSAIN*

Akbar Allahabadi and National Politics

Saiyid Akbar Husain, popularly known as Akbar Allahabadi, is widely acknowledged as a master of wit and sarcasm in Urdu poetry. He is admired as well as criticized for his trenchant attacks on western culture and education.¹ His attitude towards these matters has been surveyed extensively by Ralph Russel and Khurshidul Islam.² We are here concerned with the political content of his poetry, which suggests that Akbar was an early and outstanding nationalist Urdu poet.

Akbar was born on 16 November 1846 in the village Barah, Allahabad, in a family of Saiyids who claimed to have originally come from Teheran (Iran).³ His father, Moulvi Tafazzul Husain served as a Naib Tahsildar and is said to have been a highly educated person.⁴ His mother came from a *zamindar* family of village Jagdishpur, district Gaya (Bihar).⁵ Akbar received his early education from his father at home. In 1855, his mother shifted from village Barah to Allahabad and settled in Mohalla Chowk. Akbar was admitted to the Jamuna Mission School for an English education in 1856, but he abandoned his school education in 1859. However, he continued to study English and read widely.⁶ On leaving school, Akbar joined the Railway Engineering Department as a clerk.⁷ While in service he passed an examination in Law⁸ and subsequently worked as a *tahsildar* and a *munsif* and ultimately as a sessions judge. He retired in 1903 and lived on in Allahabad where he died in September 1921.⁹

Akbar thus pursued a career almost similar to that of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, his senior contemporary. Both were attuned to an older culture, but had to move into modern times, yet they held totally divergent political views. Akbar's origins were, perhaps, a little more plebeian than those of Saiyid Ahmad and his approach at once much narrower and much wider than that of the Saiyid. While Saiyid Ahmad thought that western education would be the salvation of the Muslim gentry (*shurafa*),¹⁰ Akbar made western education and culture a major target of his attack. Though neither an advocate of egalitarianism nor even remotely a socialist, he went far beyond the confines which Saiyid Ahmad set himself. He rejected western culture,

bitterly attacked British rule, consistently opposed all attempts to divide Muslims from Hindus and looked forward to the freedom, not only of India, but of Asia as a whole

A collection of Akbar's verses (*Kulliyat*) was first published by his son, Saiyid Ishrat Husain, in 1908¹¹ Within a year this was reprinted by Munshi Azmat Ali under the title *Kulliyat-i-Akbar* without any substantial change¹² In these editions no conscious effort seems to have been made to chronologically arrange the individual poems, though a few of the poems are dated An improved edition, in terms of chronological arrangement, of the *Kulliyat* was published from Karachi in 1951 But it has many other inaccuracies¹³ However, the difficulties associated with dating the poems notwithstanding, these two editions of the *Kulliyat* enable us to trace Akbar's poems to particular periods, based on the sections in which they are placed The periods assigned to the various parts are

- (i) Part I, 1863-75
- (ii) Part II, 1875-1890
- (iii) Part III, 1890-1908
- (iv) Part IV, 1864-1876
- (v) Part V, *qata'at* up to 1905
- (vi) Part VI, consists of poems relating to special occasions some of which are being dated¹⁴
- (vii) Part VII and VIII, up to 1908¹⁵

The second, third and fourth volumes of the *Kulliyat* were published after Akbar's death, and contain verses from three successive periods Vol II, 1908-12, Vol III, 1912-18,¹⁶ and Vol IV, 1918-21. Akbar also composed a number of verses that are purely political in nature, dealing with the stormy 1919-21 period, which have been posthumously published in a separate collection, *Gandhi Nama*¹⁷ Most of these verses also appear in Volume IV of the *Kulliyat*

EARLY WORK

The verses composed during the early part of Akbar's life are largely around conventional love themes But after the 1870s, he drops these conventional themes and increasingly focuses on topical problems of the day Despite all his limitations, in this he was something of a pioneer Rejection of western culture is now prominent in his poetry, but what is more remarkable is his criticism of the colonial government and scorn for Muslim loyalists

Akbar was all admiration for Sir Saiyid's dedicated zeal in trying to ameliorate the position of the Muslim community¹⁸ But the latter's growing inclination towards western culture and his loyalist stance provoked Akbar's hostility His criticism was, however, not personal For as early as 1875 he made his stand clear. 'The poet's utterances are

not devoid of the names of the Saiyid and the Shaikh,/But the poet is not addressing himself to their persons '19

The adverse effect on communal harmony²⁰ of the Hindi-Urdu controversy which began in 1867, was intensified by the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' Prompted by his assessment of the situation, Akbar warned his compatriots, 'I have witnessed the policies of the Muslims and the moves of the Hindus /The first is puerile, and the other usually dangerous ' 21

By 1871, differences surfaced between the two communities over the issue of cow slaughter in addition to that of language (Hindi-Urdu) Akbar protested against this and, even more significantly, suggested that it was all to the advantage of the rulers

Where is now that friendship between the Muslims
and the Hindus?
The enemies now pass, smiling at them
They quarrel over the cow and language,
The prescription of '*gao-zuban*' ('cow's tongue' is a prescription
in Unani medicine) is extremely harmful 22

Akbar looked beyond these quarrels to the situation prevalent in the country He was one with Dadabhoy Naoroji in seeing India as no more than a helpless colony, subjected to unrestrained economic exploitation by Britain In the face of this reality, how futile was the mutual bickering of the Hindus and Muslims? The poet admonishes them in the following verse

It is wrong to say that India is the land of Islam,
It is false to say that India is the country of Lakshman and Ram,
All of us are the subjects and well-wishers of the English,
What is India, but a godown for Europe?23

Akbar served as Munsif of Kol (Aligarh) in 1880 24 He met Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan (the Saiyid) but, if Akbar is to be believed, the parting of ways was swift enough

One night I went to meet the Saiyid,
Unfortunately, we could not have a long conversation
He said 'To support religious reforms is your duty',
I went away, saying good-bye 25

A TRADITIONALIST

Akbar was at heart a traditionalist, and loved the old values and culture to distraction, yet he also believed that modern education should be made available to Muslims He admired Sir Saiyid for his social and educational work, and most interestingly, describes the lack of education as a factor behind India's national subjugation

Every one knows that knowledge breathes in the spirit of life,
 If one is ignorant, one is still not fully a man
 If any nation in the world is deprived of knowledge
 and science (*hunar*),
 Nature prescribes that it should remain a slave,
 If education is not imparted according to the needs of the time,
 Then what hope of wealth, comfort and honour?²⁶

In some verses, Akbar censures both the Aligarh modernists and the Muslim conservatives, for taking extreme positions

O Akbar, if I remain firm in my old ways,
 The Saiyid says plainly that this attitude [lit colour]
 is tarnished,
 And if I adopt the modern ways, then my own community
 raises such a hue and cry
 If I speak of moderation then this is not well received
 on either side,
 All of them have spread out their legs beyond limit
 One is adamant so as not to touch even lemonade,
 While the other cries out for wine and cup
 On one side, there is motive and interest,
 On the other, a postbag containing Revelations from Britain ²⁷

As is seen here, Akbar's continuous and growing criticism of Sir Saiyid was not simply due to the latter's espousal of western culture, but essentially to his loyalty to the British government. This may, again, be seen in the following verse

Europe, by showing its [white] colour, has made the Saiyid
 her *murid* [disciple],
 The Saiyid was able to escape all *pirs* [*sufi* preceptors], but for
 this *pir*, he has proved to be helpless ²⁸

Indeed, as early as 1890, Akbar understood the significance of industry and commerce, and realized that

Nations rise because of their commerce,
 This is how they realize ascension [to heaven]
 In fact Trade is Empire,
 Today the basis of European power is this
 The word 'trader' is also a proof of this
 For lo! the trader wears the crown ²⁹

He, therefore, discourages Indians from turning to government services and asks them to take interest in industry and agriculture after attaining some education.³⁰ But to those who wish to earn fortunes and

become rich Akbar proposed 'O Indian, leave your individual isolation /Try to form a Company instead' ³¹

Sir Saiyid's speech at Meerut (14 March 1888),³² in which he attacked the Congress, was a major event in Indian politics. Despite his traditionalism, Akbar rejected this attempt to treat Muslims and Hindus as different nations. He believed that Hindus and Muslims belonged to one nation, that they had a common destiny and that language linked them.

Hindus and Muslims, both are one,
That is, both are Asians
Of one country, of one language, of one fate,
Why shouldn't I say, 'we are just brothers' ³³

The agitation of the early nationalists for electoral representation led to the Indian Councils Act 1892, enlarging the non-official membership of the councils. But this was merely a paper concession and did not satisfy the orthodox nationalists. Akbar shared these sentiments of dissatisfaction.

All sorts of laws are flowing out from the councils,
All kinds of articles are running off the presses
But how can I read them, for my eyes are in no condition to do so?
For if they were full of tears yesterday, now they are
full of blood ³⁴

He puts the following words in the mouths of the Muslim loyalists seeking a place in the Councils in order to be yes-men of the government.

In truth, I am a Nightingale
If I have become a Parrot,
This only because I had to become a Member of the Council,
Out of an appetite for chicken-feed ³⁵

While Akbar does not directly say anything explicitly in support of the Congress, as early as 1901 he praised Lala Nihal Chand for his speech on the Rent Bill.

Praised by both the elect and the sundry is Lala Nihal Chand,
The door of his kindness is never closed
Many are those who are forward in collecting subscriptions,³⁶
And remain engaged in discussing the Quran, Veda and Avesta
But when real hard work comes,
Then you alone speak of our sorrows,
You raise our grievances with the rulers,
Whenever the law threatens to harm us
When your speech on the Rent Bill was heard by the country,

It cried out 'This battle you alone could wage, and this is
what brave men do!'³⁷

With the death of Sir Saiyid (1898), a new era in Aligarh politics began. Sir Saiyid's allegiance to the British had been rendered with a certain restraint and caution.³⁸ But as the national movement gained momentum and official patronage to pro-British elements in the country increased, the loyalists at Aligarh became much more vocal. The Hindi-Urdu controversy intensified communal sentiments on both sides. The Aligarh group led by Mohsin-ul Mulk³⁹ paid special attention to expanding the scope of the authority of the Muslim Educational Conference. This drew a sharp response from Akbar who in 1902 wrote a long poem ridiculing the Conference, and the collection of donations which was its special object.

Always to weep for the community is useless,
What will come of these things?
It amounts to squandering money for nothing
Sowing seed in saline land is of no use.⁴⁰

And

For a long time I have been keeping a watch,
There is no other work to do,
Just 'give money, give money'!⁴¹

Akbar thought that Mohsin-ul Mulk was being guided by the British Government and the game of the Conference was to fulfil their requirements.

An Englishman has well said—
And he has given us all this progress and that—
'We are calling the tune here
What of Saiyid or Mehdī [Mohsin-ul Mulk]?'⁴²

Akbar advised the Conference leaders that instead of collecting public contributions, they should do some more material service.

You should so make plans,
That arts and professions may proliferate
within the community
Do wield the axe of Industry,
To cut down the jungles of poverty.⁴³

This economic modernism of Akbar ought to be remembered when one thinks of his conservatism in religious and cultural matters.

Curzon's appointment as Viceroy of India in 1898 caused much excitement Akbar shared in this excitement by writing 'Curzon Sabha', a largely laudatory poem But soon enough Curzon's policies in India made him unpopular among nationalist circles and Akbar shared this disillusionment ⁴⁴ He now censured the Aligarh loyalists for their devotion to Curzon ⁴⁵ His poem 'Glimpses of Delhi Darbar' (1903) is a piece of bitter satire, and goes so far as to refer sneeringly to Lady Curzon's dancing in the ball ⁴⁶

BENGAL PARTITION AND AFTER

In order to weaken the national movement, and divide Indians on communal lines, Curzon devised the scheme of partitioning Bengal (1905) The great agitation (for Swaraj and Swadeshi) which followed was utilized by the British government to rally Muslim support But Akbar was unimpressed with these moves of the imperialists He proclaimed his sympathies for the Swadeshi cause:

As far as I can see, this work is one of public welfare,
This would provide strength to the root of the country's tree,
O Akbar, I am in ecstasy at the Swadeshi Movement,
What a beautiful song is being sung to the tune of the country ⁴⁷

When printing this in the *Kulliyat*, the editor noted that 'this poem was composed at the beginning of the Swadeshi Movement, the author [however] does not agree with noisome agitation (*shor-shair*)' ⁴⁸ Whatever Akbar's reservations about the methods of the anti-Partition agitationists, his public support for their cause is still remarkable

In 1906, some Muslim leaders (with the Agha Khan at their head) formed the famous Simla Deputation Akbar discerned the British hand behind this enterprise, in the context of the government's difficulties with the nationalist agitation in Bengal:

Heart-ravishing breezes have come into the Garden,
The hair-braids [of the Beloved] have been blown into the plains
[lit lap] from Simla
When the Raja ji [the British] was annoyed with Durgaji
[the Bengalis],
Bi Nasiban [female name among uneducated Muslims]
rushed to offer herself ⁴⁹

On the actual doings of the deputation, which Akbar considered to have been composed of loyalists pure and simple, merciless satire poured forth

The delegates have agreed on a programme at Simla,
After a sumptuous dinner, such grunts are certainly permissible

There should be a Central and also a Provincial Committee,
 Sympathetic to the public but also looking towards the Council
 But it should have no concern with clamour such as the Babus raise,
 We should only endorse [whatever is proposed by government]
 without ascertaining its nature in whole or detail ⁵⁰

A few years before his retirement Akbar was granted the title of Khan Bahadur (1898), a title for which many eminent Muslims of the day aspired. But by this time, under the growing impact of nationalism, people began to suspect recipients of such honours. Though Akbar accepted the honour for the sake of retaining his pension as a government servant, he could not fail to be apologetic in view of his own anti-British views. 'How this K B [Khan Bahadur] has been attached to Akbar's name,/The angels will apprehend such gazetted honour' ⁵¹ And again 'The sky has appreciated my aspirations as a lover in a strange way,/I was the lover of the sword-shape of the eye-brow, and Fate has made me Khan Bahadur (lit. Brave General)' ⁵²

As a retired government servant Akbar had to maintain a semblance of loyalty. He had, therefore, to occasionally take shelter behind similes and metaphors. In one of his letters to Shaikh Abdul Qadir (15 October 1908) he writes

Humorous and miscellaneous verses of wit are quite mixed up. Some of them with extreme touch of wit are in fact the expressions of political ideas. Liberty and Self Government have been styled the 'waist' (of the beloved), high position [in Government] as 'union' [*wasl*] Muslim policy as the Lover ⁵³

Akbar's political ideas and understanding of nationalism transcends the barriers of group and religion. In spite of his own religious conservatism, he did not believe in mixing religion with politics and he held all religions in great esteem.

I admire the way of all religions,
 I dance in the mosque at the sound of the temple bells
 O Brahman! I would call all the rivers my mother
 This is not confined to the Narbada and the Ganga ⁵⁴

Akbar was thus not a communalist, as his stout nationalist position in the years 1905-06 in any case distinctly brings out. In 1909, at another great time of trial—when the Indian Councils Act, 1909 proclaimed communal electorates—Akbar refused to join in the jubilation of the Muslim League. 'You are most welcome to leap and jump [in joy] in December,/I too have blood in my veins, but I would rather wait for Phagun [i.e. coming of Holi]' ⁵⁵

Akbar was distressed by the open communal cleavage that resulted from British diplomacy, especially after the partition of Bengal and

the Act of 1909 He thought that the new situation arose out of the policies of the stalwarts of modern education, Sir Saiyid and Sir Asutosh Mukerjee 'Mutual unity is not easy in this country,/When here is a Sir Saiyid and there a Babu Asutosh' ⁵⁶

This idea is rooted in Akbar's consistent hostility to the Muslim League which he regarded as product of the Aligarh loyalists

All the members of League who are in the Committee,
By grace of God, are my colleagues,
But those worth my special regard,
Are those who suffix their names with the word 'Alig' ⁵⁷

Thus the Muslim League was seen by him as essentially a party of yes-men 'The sphere of the League's activities is limited indeed'/ Only the scope of the talk (*lit areas of meeting*) is limitless ⁵⁸ Akbar frankly read motives into the doings of the educated loyalists

Where the Sahib is, there is wealth, and wherever wealth is,
there is collection of donations,
And where there is collection of donations, there are honours,
And where there are honours, there would be I ⁵⁹

It may, however, be worth repeating that Akbar's animosity to modern education stemmed from his hostility to British dominance In a striking verse he says 'So long as Asia is being ruled by the West,/ We cannot acquire its achievements' ⁶⁰

A NEW AGGRESSIVENESS

Akbar's verses took a new form of aggressiveness when the second Delhi Darbar took place in 1911 He indulges in a bitter denunciation of the loyalists

After a two days' stay I saw the Spring at Delhi,
There was a big gathering at the orders of the rulers
The Eastern dummies were eager to serve with vigour,
The Western faces held a clear expression of self-satisfaction
The Conquerors of India were seething with limitless pride,
While the [Indian] 'honourables' were lined up according to
fixed ranks
Only the thoughts of their hotel expenses were troubling
their hearts,
Immersed in personal worries, forgetting the nation's cause
Dinners, gifts, speeches, parades and the Army camps,
Honours, pleasures, hopes, cautions and trust,
First the King, then their Highnesses, then the Princes,
After all of them, came the humble faithful
Shaikh Sahib [the loyalist Muslim] ⁶¹

Akbar contrasted the Loyalists (put here in the first person plural) with the Nationalists (Babus):

The Baboos said. 'Fight over the Budget,
Look to your country, demand your rights,'
We told them clearly, 'O Gentlemen [Maharaj],
Such conduct suits you.
As for us, we are the dwellers of the lanes of the Beloved
[the British government],
Either there is a deputation (which we have to join), or we
have to run after the English ladies [Ma'em'] ⁶²

But with the Turko-Italian War (1911), coming immediately after the announcement of the abolition of the Partition of Bengal, Indian Muslims were affected by a sudden bout of anti-British feeling. Speeches and meetings proliferated Akbar's sense of realism prevented full-throated approval of such a sudden outburst of indignant verbiage

Neither we possess licenses for weapons, nor have the
strength to go and fight the enemies of the Turks,
But we do curse them from the core of our hearts,
That God may spike the Italian guns ⁶³

The poem on the Turko-Italian war is of considerable political interest. It refers to the British allegations against Turkey and the reactions of Indian Muslims to it. Akbar suggests that a section of the people believed that the Turkey of the Young Turks would achieve modernity, while some held the view that their endeavour amounted to self-destruction. But in the end Akbar cannot refrain from yet another sally at the Loyalists. 'I am bound to follow the view of the Indian Darbar, I have the same opinion as that of the Sarkar (government)' ⁶⁴

Akbar concludes the poem on an optimistic note. 'History has seen many colours passing in the sky,/ The sun always rises out of the curtain of the night' ⁶⁵ He urged more practical support to Turkey than mere words. 'It is useless that one supports the Arabs or the "Ajam" [the non-Arabs], Mere support is nothing without the strength of the sword supporting the pen' ⁶⁶

Akbar believed that 'power' was the basic lever of political progress. 'Religion is society, and faith is salvation, if you ask what is politics, it is only power and strength' ⁶⁷ As Akbar grew older, his attitude towards the west hardened. He believed that in the guise of 'progress' the west invented a technique to trap the east and keep the subject people loyal to them. 'Their main object is to trap the lions of the East,/Some buffaloes have just been tied as baits in the name of progress' ⁶⁸ Akbar warns Indians not to run after European culture and

fashions: 'A villager sang in the tune of the country./"Biscuits are not softer than *puris* and *chapatis* '" 69

At this time (1913) the firing by police on a Muslim crowd during the Kanpur mosque dispute greatly agitated Muslims in U.P.⁷⁰ Akbar wrote a poem calling the victims 'martyrs' and linking their destiny with that of Turkey.⁷¹ He was censured by the government and forbidden to write such poems.⁷² Akbar promised to be careful in future. He, however, continued to compose and the following lines appear to have been written later

Our breasts are such as to face even rifle-fire,
But their ears are so delicate that even my lyric hurts them.
Akbar has orders not to compose such verses,
Verily, Khwaja Hafiz is turned out of the pub.⁷³

During the course of the First World War (1914-18), the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' was not confined to exploiting the divide between Hindus and Muslims. It was extended to divisions between sects of Muslims also. Abdul Majid Daryabadi, a junior contemporary of Akbar, says that during 1917-18 there arose a great controversy among the Sunnis about differences between *tarigat*⁷⁴ and *shari'at*.⁷⁵ The supporters of the *tarigat* were backed by an Urdu newspaper, the *Zamindar* of Lahore. All those supporting the *shari'at* took shelter in one of the *dargahs* (shrines) of Delhi. When the situation worsened, both the parties appealed for government protection, apprehending 'breach of peace'. Akbar was shocked at this frivolous issue. 'Now the Moulvies are fighting with the *sufis*,/Good news for the outsiders that we are at each other's throat.'⁷⁶

British diplomacy seems to have also made a dent in Shia-Sunni relations

The war between the Shias and Sunnis is in full swing,
It has honoured the names of the Char-Yars⁷⁷ and the Panjtan.⁷⁸
What honour will you obtain out of these actions in Heaven,
When on this earth you have become the slaves of others?⁷⁹

With the end of the First World War came the promised constitutional concessions, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. These found in Akbar a trenchant critic. He felt the elections would merely divide Indians with no gain accruing since the Councils had no powers. 'The native had to be shown something, (Otherwise) the Council is in the pocket of those who have the Raj.'⁸⁰ As for local self-government. 'Whoever be the members—Ali Murad or Sukh Nidhan—/Their right is only to inspect the drains.'⁸¹

The result of the scheme would thus be a fruitless conflict among Indians. 'A brother is locked in fight with brother, "Self-Government" has arrived.'⁸²

As the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements developed, Akbar's sympathies naturally gravitated towards them. The internment of the Ali brothers during the war greatly moved him. He wrote

- Although weakness has sealed our lips,
 • The doors of our hearts are not closed to the reality
 How long will our helplessness remain unknown [to the world]?
 The news of our condition can, at least, reach God,
 Out of grief for the interned friends
 • We have also ceased meeting [the English] ⁸³

In some other lines, he specifically mentions the Ali brothers

It is difficult indeed to deserve honours [*anar*],
 It is not easy to be Ali Brothers
 Let us jointly pray for these persons, and
 To make it easy for them to be guides and leaders ⁸⁴

Akbar's criticism of the Loyalist Muslims grew to a higher pitch during the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements. The Aligarh loyalists were now led by Dr Sir Ziauddin. Akbar's wrath fell on him as he compared him with Shaukat Ali. 'In habits and manners, Shaukat and Ziauddin are the same,/But one is a tiger in the jungle and the other in the zoo, and that is the only difference' ⁸⁵

Akbar was, however, apprehensive of the various elements now joining the national movement

When the oil of the new light began to burn out,
 The Government also reduced its support to it
 The Moulvis too were in neglect,
 They had neither office nor seats [of power]
 It was resolved by both to join together,
 To crowd into a political Committee,
 Such is the light that has emerged,
 God knows whether this is illumination or darkness ⁸⁶

NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

During the Non-Cooperation movement, Akbar composed scores of verses which throw light on his assessment of the movement. These verses have since been compiled and published under the title, *Gandhi Nama*. The *Gandhi Nama* is divided into two parts, the division being in rough chronological sequence. About the unity achieved between the Khilafatists and the Congress, Akbar had this to say: 'Neither the Moulana has weakened, nor has Gandhi turned conspirator,/ They have been forced together to move in one direction, by the storm from the West' ⁸⁷

Akbar also made fun of the many cautious people who joined the bandwagon of the Congress, since Non-Violence could give them protection

Why should we not become Gandhi's *wazir*,
He's not an Enver or the Ameer of Kabul
We can adopt both the [Muslim's] prayer-beads
and the [Hindu's] sacred thread,
The people [*qaum*] would be pleased, and the Government too would
not be alarmed ⁸⁸

With the progress of the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements, most of the nationalist leaders were put behind bars, but Gandhi was spared. Malaviya, Jinnah and others attempted to bring about a settlement with the government. Reading's insistence on keeping certain classes of prisoners behind bars with the motive of creating division between the Khilafatists and the Congress, suggested to Akbar a clear policy of dividing the nationalist ranks.

I ask, 'Why don't you arrest Gandhi?'
They say, 'Why don't you quarrel among ourselves?'
When your fortune takes an evil turn [with internecine quarrels],
Then we would adopt a judicious mien and act as the judge ⁸⁹

Akbar's great merit is that at this juncture not only was he aware of the benefit the British could derive from inter-communal suspicions,⁹⁰ but was alert to all signs of such divisions within the nationalist camp. Thus his criticism of Shaukat Ali and Malaviya for playing the British game.

Shaukat and Malaviya, who are with us,
Began to speak to each other
Then they separated and met at the public meeting,
There it was discovered what object they have had at heart
One spoke of the harm apprehended from Kabul
'We would rather prefer the English [to the Ameer].'
The other threatened that rather than live under Hindu Rule,
'We would agree to have the English [as masters] '
Neither of them was bitter with the other over this,
But began to sing together in the same tune
'O Benefactor [the English], grant us favour,
For we are the slaves of greed ⁹¹

The repressive policy of the colonial government and the growing mutual distrust among the nationalists seem to have made Akbar a prey to pessimism about the success of the national movement. 'There will be the cries of "Jai" and the whirling of the spinning wheel,/'

Mind, [whatever happens] the Sahib would not flee '92 Later on, he would similarly exclaim In thousands of ways the English hold us,/Science, language, Press and the vocabulary all are theirs /They have complete control over everything in life '93

In the closing phase of his life, Akbar became a great admirer of Gandhiji, and he would now say 'Had Akbar not been a 'kept man' [*mandkhul*] of his Government, You would have found him among Gandhi's devotees *gopis*] '94 And on another occasion

There are many who support Non-Cooperation;
But among the higher classes, most incline towards the English
Only wilfulness decrees that when one opens one's mouth
It is to say Victory [*jai*] to Gandhiji, the Leader [*peshwa*]
of our country '95

His bitterness against the Loyalists continued unabated

They have always aspired for honours and wealth
from the English,
How can their attitude be changed in old age?
Mr Jalib should publish this in *Hamdam* '96
Our entire lives have passed in the love of the
beloved (the English),
How now can we become Muslims in our last days?'97

More in the same strain

We have always lived in the lane of the service of the English,
All our days have been spent in the desire for honours and money
How can a change of heart come with a mere sermon by Gandhi?'98

Akbar was extremely religious throughout his life Towards the closing years of his life he came to be excessively other-worldly But even in this stage of his life, he expressed his love for his country The twist of the *dhoti* is superior to the button of the *patloon* [European trousers] But, of course, the best is one who does not think of anything of this world '99

Akbar died on 9 September 1921 before the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement His popularity as a satirist and his apparent bitterness against modern education have obscured his fundamentally nationalist position, his consuming hatred for the alien rulers, his unflagging contempt of the loyalists and their ways, and his admiration for all those who stood up to the British Beyond this there was great wisdom in him too, and his urge for national unity was sincere and unalloyed For all this, he must claim an honourable place in the political annals of Modern India—in spite of his own scorn for 'honours'.

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44 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

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7

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ASHA S KANWAR*

Raymond Williams and the English Novel

Raymond Williams is influential in various fields—English studies, sociology, politics, and cultural and media studies; his achievement is comparable in range and scope to that of Lukacs or Benjamin, as Eagleton has rightly observed.¹ Among the socialist writers in contemporary Britain, he is what E.P. Thompson calls 'our best man', and Anthony Bennett praises him on the grounds that he 'stands for a kind of truthfulness'.² Not only in India, but even within the context of British academia, Williams' concepts are requisitioned, modified, developed but certainly not ignored. His work has generated research in different areas, though the present discussion will deal with a particular sector of his work—the field of fictional criticism.

In Sections I, II and III, the focus will be on his concepts of the 'knowable community', 'structure of feeling' and 'realism', these being key terms in his methodology. However, these terms are not narrowly literary critical but have a direct bearing on the analysis of culture. Therefore, a brief look at Williams' understanding and definition of the term 'culture' is relevant here.

According to Williams, 'literary theory cannot be separated from cultural theory, though it may be distinguished within it'.³ In the early 1960s, when Williams tried to establish his position in regard to the notion of culture, he saw it as 'creative activity' and as 'a whole way of life'.⁴ In the 1970s, he moved to a 'theory of cultural materialism' which he defined as 'the analysis of all forms of signification, including quite centrally writing, within the actual means and conditions of their production'. This can be seen as the rapprochement of his earlier ideas with Marxism.⁵ But his approach is eclectic in the sense that he takes up what he considers are the positive aspects of Marxism and combines them with the traditional liberal outlook that can be traced back to F.R. Leavis and Mathew Arnold.

However, Williams' enterprise aims at the supersession of the notion of an elite culture replaceable by a democratic common culture that will ultimately overcome class distinctions in society. The process must enlist the efforts of the people themselves.

The struggle with which that process confronts us now is, I believe, the struggle to create public meanings which are authentic forums to create a society whose values are at once commonly created and criticized, and where the discussions and exclusions of class may be replaced by the reality of common and equal membership. That, still, is the idea of a common culture.⁶

In his call for the democratization of culture, Williams is breaking away from the tradition of Arnold and Leavis, key figures in any discussion of 'culture'. For Arnold, culture is the 'pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know . . . the best that has been thought and said in the world'.⁷ Leavis, on the other hand, finds himself facing a modern industrial society with its attendant phenomena of mass production and mass media, which in turn have created mass society, where the decline in the quality of life and standards of aesthetic value can only be deplored in the strongest terms: 'What we have lost is the organic community'.⁸

Williams, however, dismisses the notion of 'organic community' as a pastoral myth in *The Country and the City*. In fact, Leavis's concept is a sort of utopia in retrospect. In order to regain this lost community, the elite would have a specific role to play. By the elite, Leavis refers neither to religious nor to political leaders but to intellectuals, believing that 'in any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends'.⁹ For Arnold, the appreciation of art and literature is the means by which culture can be attained, in Leavis art *is* culture, Williams takes culture to mean an ever-evolving process, arising out of 'a whole way of life'. In *The Long Revolution*, Williams points out that there are three levels of culture operative at any particular point in time—the 'lived culture' of a certain period that is only experienced by the people then alive, the 'recorded culture' evident in art, buildings or dress, and the culture of the 'selective tradition'.¹⁰ The hegemonic process involved in the selection or rejection of a tradition depends upon the effective dominant culture which operates at all levels of society in subtle ways.

The processes of education, the processes of a much wider social training within institutions like the family, the practical definitions and organization of work, the selective tradition at an intellectual and theoretical level, all these forces are involved in a continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture, and on them, as experienced, as built into our living, its reality depends.¹¹

More specifically, the same process is evident in the construction of literary traditions and canons. Williams began his career as a literary critic with *Reading and Criticism* (1950), although it was not until 1971 that he again published a consolidated book on the novel, *The English*

Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, which is a transcription of the eleven lectures that he delivered in Cambridge from 1961 to 1968 (This is not to suggest that he did no work on the novel in the interim) If the former book is overtly Leavisite, the gap of twenty-one years seems to have sustained the influence Eagleton believes *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* is an implicit riposte to *The Great Tradition*. the book is a *rewriting* of the 'great tradition' from an alternative stand-point, rather than a total displacement of that critical terrain¹²

Although Williams extends the tradition, he adheres to the main course charted by Leavis and had it not been for this particular influence, he would not start his assessment of the novel 'the 1840s but in the 1790s'¹³ It would then hardly seem a coincidence that he discusses mainly canonical texts in most of his discussions of the novel, that is, in *The English Novel*, in *Modern Tragedy* and in *The Country and the City* However, the latter includes a discussion of working-class novels as well While he is working within the 'dominant literary paradigm'¹⁴ in *The English Novel*, in *The Country and the City* he takes up literature not for the purposes of literary analysis but as historical evidence to expose the ideology that would maintain the country/city dichotomy

Highly selective, Leavis opens *The Great Tradition* with the announcement that, 'The great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad. . .'¹⁵ Williams discusses these writers at some length, with the sole exception of James whom he brackets with Wells At the same time he accords a place of honour to the writer who had been referred to patronizingly by James as 'the good little Thomas Hardy'¹⁶ Leavis and Williams both install George Eliot as the superior novelist when compared with Jane Austen Leavis then discusses the early phase of Eliot's development, paying special attention to *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, whereas according to Williams *Adam Bede* is the novel of primary merit James is treated with reverence by Leavis while Williams finds Wells superior in some respects After studying the novels of Conrad, Williams focuses attention on the trauma of being 'alone in the city', with reference to the city novelists, Gissing, Dickens, Mrs Gaskell, Joyce and Lawrence, praising *Sons and Lovers* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, taking up for censure the very novel that Leavis praises, *Women in Love* So while Williams' alternate tradition implicitly takes off from the earlier one, the emphasis has changed It is clear that the differing perspective is based on the ideological positions of the two critics For example, critics have traced Williams' favouring of Hardy to his own working-class origins This may not be strictly true, but throughout his preoccupation with the tension between the 'educated' and the 'customary', one can see his own life situated in the 'border country' between Wales and Cambridge and between middle and working-class consciousness (Williams' attempt to maintain his Welsh links is

especially evident in his novels.) Throughout his work Williams is trying to resolve a series of basic dichotomies— between high and common culture, between the individual and the social, between country and city, and it is this attempt that perhaps contributes to the difficulty that is involved in understanding his work. It is this search for totality that partly accounts for the inception of the term 'knowable community'

'KNOWABLE COMMUNITY'

'Knowable community' may be the binding principle in *The English Novel* but it is only defined in *Politics and Letters*. 'Those novels which can attain an effective range of social experience by sufficiently manifest immediate relations possess a knowable community'¹⁷

Commenting on the spurt of novels written during those twenty months between 1847-48, Williams says that the experience common to all the novelists of this generation is 'the exploration of community, the substance and meaning of community' (*TEN*, p. 11). It involves the question of examining relationships in a particular society and the ways these are manifested in concrete ways in fiction. In fact, it is this bearing that is dominant from Dickens to Lawrence.

Conventionally, the novel, when depicting people and their relationships, assumed that the reader and the author shared a common knowledge that social relationships are a reliable index through which persons can be known. But as a result of the rapid changes taking place in nineteenth-century society, this confidence gave way to the sense that people are only potentially knowable. It became extremely difficult to apprehend the complex urban society that was causing the fragmentation within communities. Thus, 'an important split takes place between knowable relationships and an unknown, unknowable, overwhelming society' (*TEN*, p. 15). Society is no longer viewed as a passive background against which the drama of lives unfolds itself, but as 'an agency, even an actor, a character . . . a process that entered lives to shape or to deform' (*TEN*, p. 13). When dealing with individual novelists, Williams tries to find out how, and to what extent, the novelist is able to apprehend the crisis of his time and to give it shape in his novels.

Explaining the concept further, Williams says that the 'knowable' is not an objective category alone, in the sense that it is not only 'what is there to be known' (*TEN*, p. 17) but also what the observers desire and need to know. Thus 'knowable community' incorporates both social fact and the consciousness of the author. For 'novelists did not simply react to the conformations of the social crisis, but subjected them to an intricate process of redefinition'¹⁸ What is important then is the writer's defining consciousness. Referring to George Eliot, Williams differentiates between the 'knowable' and the 'known' community.

The knowable community is the common life, which she is pleased to record with a necessary emphasis. But the known community is something else again—an uneasy contract, in language with another interest and another sensibility (*TEN*, p. 82)

This 'uneasy contract' is the tension between the 'narrative idiom of the novelist and the recorded language of her characters' (*TEN*, pp. 79-80). It is on this continuous conflict between 'customary' and 'educated' language that Williams traces the tradition from George Eliot to Hardy to Lawrence. Williams suggests that Lawrence, in his early short stories, succeeds where Hardy and Dickens before him had failed, that is, in resolving the tension between the language of the novelist and that of the characters. On the other hand, it would seem that this disruption is conducive to creative activity, for example, because of this problem, George Eliot had to create almost a new form each time she wrote.

From the 1890s to 1914, there is a growing awareness of the split between the individual and society. The isolated consciousness creates its own community and this is manifested in the 'internal disturbances of language and form' (*TEN*, p. 124). The language that emerges to articulate this experience is then ordinary, divested as it is of conventional trappings (trappings that could be associated with traditional forms) as in *Ulysses* which Williams praises for the 'community of speech'. Alternate critical positions would contend that there was precisely this community of speech lacking in *Ulysses*.¹⁹

One can gauge the importance that Williams assigns to language from his statement that 'the most deeply known human community is language itself' (*TEN*, p. 167). But language does not necessarily entail an analysis of style but is an index through which human relationships can be gauged. Thus the concept of knowable community not only embodies a depiction of social experience by the defining consciousness of the writer, but also its articulation in language, that is seen as 'historically and socially constituting'.²⁰ However, all social experience is not recordable for there is also that intangible, elusive experience which, because it is still in process, is not yet articulate. Williams describes this as the 'structure of feeling' from which 'all art is made' (*TEN*, p. 192).

'STRUCTURE OF FEELING'

'Structure of feeling', a socio-cultural term, is an important element in Williams' methodology and one he uses frequently in his discussion of drama and the novel. Though sparingly used in *The English Novel* it occurs fairly often in *The Country and the City*. It is explained at length in *The Long Revolution* and dealt with theoretically in *Marxism and Literature*, though it was first used by Williams in *Preface to Film* (1954).

2 To relate a work of art to any part of that observed totality may, in varying degrees, be useful, but it is a common experience, in analysis, to realize that when one has measured the work against the separable parts, there yet remains an element for which there is no external counterpart. This element, I believe is what I have named the structure of feeling of a period and it is only realizable through experience of the work of art itself.²¹

Here the main emphasis is on experience. But to speak of experience in the past as a fixed entity is to imply that it is a static finished product. All experience is a process and to express this sense of continuity Williams has devised the term—'it is as firm and definite as "structure" suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity'.²² Though a very complex term, the only way to simplify it is to say that it corresponds roughly to the culture of that time. It is not necessary for the structure of feeling of a particular period to be common to all members of the community, yet it is a 'very wide possession'²³ and all communication depends upon it.

At any point in time, there are three levels of structure of feeling in operation, corresponding roughly to the three generations living at that time.²⁴ Each generation creates its own structure of feeling in response or reaction to the world it inherits, taking up, abandoning, changing the values of its predecessors. According to Williams, the structure of feeling is not to be equated with the documentary culture or the social character of the period. Documentary culture, like fashions and buildings, provides direct evidence of the period, whereas the structure of feeling is not so easily accessible—it can elude people even in close contact with it. The structure of feeling can be said to correspond in part to the dominant social character of a period, yet there is a crucial difference. Public ideals, for example, honesty and hard work, constitute the dominant social character but the structure of feeling is related to the effect that this does or does not have on the life of the people. Thus the social character is the 'ethic' while the structure of feeling is the 'experience'.²⁵ which, without being articulate, can exert 'palpable pressures'.²⁶ While still in solution, a structure of feeling has elements of the dominant, residual and emergent characteristics of a culture and is at first taken as personal.²⁷ It is only later that this takes shape as an institution or a formation that can be recognized as social. In fact, the term structure of feeling incorporates subjective and objective aspects. For 'feeling' can be equated with the Leavisite 'experience' and the Lawrentian 'felt life', while 'structure' implies pattern or form as opposed to content. It might be possible to see a parallel here in the life-pattern categories designated by Kettle. Richard Dyer *et al* *rom* are of the opinion that

The pattern of experience, however, is not defined in terms of a set of explicit beliefs—e.g. an ideology—but in terms of the implicit structure which the social life exhibits at the level of experienced

values. thus, structure of feeling, an apparently paradoxical concept²⁸

They further find points of reference between Williams' 'structure of feeling', Lukacs' 'potential consciousness' and Goldmann's 'world vision'²⁹

According to Alistair M Duckworth, the phrase 'structure of feeling' seems to imply:

an outlook shared by a number of writers in a period, to some extent limited by historical consciousness, class allegiance, and a common inheritance of traditional topics, genres and styles, but capable nevertheless in individual instances of pushing throughout these limits to the picturing of things as they are³⁰

Duckworth points out that the view expressed here approximates to that of Lukacs when he argues that great realist writers, in spite of their conscious political views, however reactionary they might be, are able to depict social actuality.³¹

Referring to structure of feeling, Eagleton says that 'what this concept designates, in effect, is ideology. . .',³² but by stressing 'feeling', that is, the very charge that Williams wishes to avoid. Ideology may be broadly defined as the 'system of ideas appropriate' to a particular class or it may mean 'illusory or merely abstract thought'³³ While this sense of ideology can have connections with the dominant social character of a period, it is different from the structure of feeling which cannot be equated with 'ideas' or 'thought', for it refers to 'specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships, not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought. . .'.³⁴ It is possible to see close connections between 'structure of feeling' and Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony.' For hegemony does not mean overt political control but is merely a subtle way of influencing and shaping human nature and relationships. Hegemony is 'a realized complex of experiences, relationships and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits'³⁵ This differs from ideology in that it does not solely 'depend for its hold on its expression of the interests of the ruling class but also on its acceptance as "normal reality" or "common sense" by those in practice subordinated to it'³⁶ Hegemony thus penetrates to all levels of society and exerts pressures on all relationships. By adopting this concept, Williams is able to examine the political angle of 'culture'. Hegemony is primarily concerned with domination and subordination, and while it may influence the structure of feeling, it cannot be equated with it

Eagleton has suggested that 'structure of feeling' is similar to Goldmann's 'transindividual structures'. In this theory of genetic structuralism, Goldmann says that all human beings try to respond meaningfully to the problems that they encounter in the course of social

life The collective response is structured as a world-view These world-views are not static or fixed but in a constant state of structuration and destructuration, a process similar to the formation of a 'structure of feeling'. While a world-view is structured by the social class collectively, it is articulated by the writer who. ' . . achieves a coherent awareness of what, among the other members of his group, remains vague and confused, and contradicted by innumerable tendencies.'³⁷ Williams too sees the writer as naming the new responses, perceptions and interests of an age. But whereas in Goldmann this is an unconscious process, in Williams the writer is conscious of the reality he is depicting For the perception of the knowable community is a matter of conscious choice on the part of the writer. Not only does he articulate, but he also directs our attention to new ways of seeing ourselves and the world For both, Goldmann and Williams, there is no direct relationship between society and the novel in terms of content, but the relationship exists between the ideology of a society and the fictional world the writer is able to create.

Williams again shares Goldmann's view that 'cultural creation as a sector (is) privileged perhaps, but nonetheless of the same nature as all other sectors of human behaviour . . '³⁸ While similarities do exist between the two critics, 'structure of feeling' is different from transindividual structures. According to Williams, at any given time, there are three 'structures of feeling' operative corresponding to the three generations then alive. The structure of feeling of the senior group has been articulated in the previous generation whereas that of the younger generation has yet to be articulated. Therefore, it is only the 'dominantly culturally productive group'³⁹ which articulates the 'structure of feeling' of its age. (This age specification seems rather arbitrary Moreover, it ignores the psychological aspects of the situation.) It would then seem that structure of feeling is generation-specific whereas transindividual structure is class-specific. Later, however, Williams changes his position, admitting that he would now use the concept 'more differentially between classes'.⁴⁰ In spite of this the difference remains, for transindividual structures are related to world-views, which are already crystallized collective responses, whereas structure of feeling is experience 'still in solution'. Goldmann's concept can be seen more as a 'structure of thought', for it is a tangible philosophical position as opposed to Williams' fluid experiential category This could well be symptomatic of their overall historico-cultural positions—French classicism on the one hand and British romanticism/empiricism on the other.

There is yet another change in Williams' position in relation to this concept. In *The Long Revolution*, he had said that 'structure of feeling' is easier to recover in the present than in the past But, as the interviewers point out in *Politics and Letters*, it would be easier to recover in the past than the present, which is still in a state of flux. Williams concedes this saying that 'while a structure of feeling exists

in the present, so to speak, grammatically, I do not now think it more recoverable. . .'.⁴¹

What then is the relation of 'structure of feeling' to art and literature? Williams believes that 'all art is made' . . . (from) 'the structure of feeling that is lived and experienced but not quite arranged as institutions and ideas. . .' (TEN, p 192). In fact a literary text can be taken as a concrete instance of the 'structure of feeling of a particular society in a specific historical moment. It would be easy to relate the structure of feeling to the content of a literary artefact, but it cannot be simply reduced to it. As Williams says 'The idea of a structure of feeling can be specifically related to the evidence of forms and conventions— semantic figures—which, in art and literature, are often among the very first indications that such a new structure is forming'⁴² It is through relationships that are presented as 'lived' and 'felt' that a work of fiction can indicate the formation of new structures. The novelist does not merely depict these changes in social formations but makes us 'live' and 'experience' them through his art. Commenting on this concept, Eagleton says:

The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence puts the notion to superb use: the novel, for Williams, is one medium among many in which men seek to master and absorb new experience by discovering new forms and rhythms, grasping and so constructing the stuff of social change in the living substance of perceptions and relationships⁴³

'REALISM'

Williams has been charged with being 'ideologically bound to the moment of nineteenth century realism'.⁴⁴ In the nineteenth century, realism as a method in literature or art came to mean accurate representation; describing things as they actually exist.⁴⁵ Before the end of the century, there was a separation between realism and naturalism. Naturalism, as opposed to supernaturalism, implies the exclusion of God and attention to the poor and sordid details of life. But for Williams, the term realism has no such simple connotations. 'When I think of the realist tradition in fiction, I think of the kind of novel which creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of the qualities of persons.'⁴⁶ What Williams is stressing is the balance between the personal and the social; as both being coeval, with neither having priority over the other. He emphasizes that: 'Every aspect of personal life is radically affected by the quality of the general life, yet the general life is seen at its most important in completely personal terms.'⁴⁷ This synthesizing process not only marks the moment of high realism in the nineteenth century novel, but also endows the abstract events of history with a concrete quality.

According to Williams, in the twentieth century the realist novel faced a rupture between the 'social' and the 'personal'.⁴⁸ On the basis of

emphasis, the 'social' can be further sub-divided into the 'social-descriptive' and the 'social-formula' novels. The 'social-descriptive' category places its main stress on the way of life at a particular time and place rather than on individuals. In the 'social-formula' novel, the writer abstracts a pattern from his observation of social experience and creates a whole fictional world according to this 'formula'. What is missing here is real society and real persons, for the characters created are merely functional. Again, the 'personal' can be similarly sub-divided. In the 'personal descriptive' novel, society is subordinated to individual perceptions, while in the 'personal formula' characters are created in accordance with the formula derived from the author's experience. The world is created through the consciousness of a single character. This can also be termed 'the fiction of special pleading'—a narrative mode that depicts only a few people from the perspective of one or a few characters and it relies on a rather direct contact with the reader, making him empathize with the character/characters. What is lacking in all these categories is the crucial balance.

This call for balance and relationships of a whole kind links him to Lukacs and his concept of totality. For Lukacs as well, the personal is not separable from the social and what the writer expresses is not just his own thoughts and feelings, but must be able to 'grasp society as a totality'⁴⁹ which must then be depicted in a concrete way. According to Lukacs:

The hallmark of the great realist masterpiece is precisely that its intensive totality of *essential* social factors does not require, does not even tolerate, a meticulously accurate or pedantically encyclopaedic inclusion of all the threads making up the social tangle, in such a masterpiece the most essential social factors can find total expression in the apparently accidental conjunction of a few human destinies.⁵⁰

The writer of the realist masterpiece must create characters and situations, which Lukacs, following Engels, calls 'types'. For Lukacs, the author who succeeds in creating 'types' is a realist and the criterion of literary value is realism, for only realist works of art are genuine works of art.⁵¹

In his 'Lecture on Realism', Williams says that 'the three emphases which are often consciously described as realism are the secular, the contemporary and the socially extended'.⁵² While discussing the TV film *The Big Flame*, he adds another dimension to this tripartite definition, which is 'the consciously interpretative in relation to a particular political viewpoint'.⁵³

Williams' commitment to the moment of nineteenth-century high realism (classic realism) prevents him from doing full justice to the modernist text. However, it guides his own creative practice as is evident from his attempt to recreate the balance of the paradigmatic

Victorian novel in his own fiction, particularly the Welsh trilogy, *Border Country* (1960), *Second Generation* (1964) and *The Fight for Manod* (1978) Williams admits that his problem was to find a suitable form that would 'allow the description both of the internally seen working-class community and a movement of people, still feeling their family and political connections out of it' ⁵⁴ The solution then lay in turning to the nineteenth-century novel which he sees as 'successful studies of one kind of mobility, the uncertainty of moving between two kinds of life' ⁵⁵ Explaining his practice further, Williams says that ' . writers commit themselves to certain rhythms—in my case the rhythms of certain kinds of Welsh speech,' ⁵⁶ a fact that is true of all his novels. While Williams agrees that the twentieth-century cultural forms are undoubtedly drama, TV and film, that does not make the novel an anachronism for 'there are certain feelings, certain relationships. . which can be conceived in the novel' (*TEN*, p. 190)

In discussing individual novelists, Williams does not apply traditional methods of analysis like focusing on the plot, theme, characterization, symbols or narrative technique Nor does he employ the 'words on the page' methodology that the *Scrutiny* school modified from New Criticism Williams places an emphasis on the social base of literature, though he does not subscribe to the crude reflectionist mode of criticism In other words, the effects of social crises are not directly redeemable in literature of value but are mediated and over-determined in complex and subtle forms in actual personal relationships. While this method reduces reliance on evaluation to a minimum by a change in emphasis, the judgment can easily slip from the literary to the ideological (However, it might be pointed out that no judgments, literary or otherwise, are free from ideological dictates.) Williams does not dispense with evaluation but attempts to secularize the process as is evident from his observation that 'criticism leads to the hypostatization of the critic *above* the process, making judgments *inside* the process, in the way people do in everyday contemporary argument, is very different'. ⁵⁷

The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence is Williams' contribution to putting the English novel in its proper perspective, for the Continental theoreticians of the novel like Lukacs and Goldmann deal chiefly with French, Russian and German novels The term 'English' is not merely a geographical distinction, for writers of other origins—Scots, Irish, Welsh and Polish—have contributed to its tradition. In the nineteenth-century novel, Williams finds a very 'specific Englishness' which he defines as 'the common consciousness, the common culture, a very specific set of common concerns ' (*TEN*, p. 122) At another level, the concept of 'Englishness' is rejected by Williams when it is 'congruent with much more general reflexes and campaigns of the English ruling-class as a whole . . ' ⁵⁸ and it is this constant dialectic within Williams' thought which has been characterized by Parrinder as his 'negativity' ⁵⁹

Williams's overall position can then be categorized as 'socialist-humanist'. An illustration of Williams's critical practice featuring specific texts cannot be undertaken here. However, Williams's enterprise can be broadly termed 'realist-centric'. As we have seen, his concepts, especially the tripartite distinction of the residual-dominant-emergent, are particularly helpful in unravelling the complex structure of feeling of a specific period in a particular text. Williams's recent position not only incorporates a consideration of the historical and material conditions of cultural production but also the social and historical conditions of the reader's response. This then affirms the thesis that textual interpretation is historically and culturally variable and critical practice is a dialectical process that is in a continuous state of dynamic flux. This premise has far-reaching implications for the development of theories dealing with gender and race relations, areas that have, until recently, been consigned to marginality, dispossession and subordination.

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- 51 According to Istvan Meszaros, 'Realism is the central notion of Marxist aesthetics for Marx, realism is not just one among the innumerable artistic trends but the only mode of reflection of reality which is adequate to the specific powers and means at the disposal of the artist' *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, Merlin, London, 1970, p 198 Even within a Marxist framework, realism has not has a uniform definition or unproblematic character The two opposing perspectives on realism, broadly classic realism and neo-realism, can be generally situated in the debates between the Formalists and Socialist Realists in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s and the celebrated Lukacs/Brecht debate also in the 30s
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DISCUSSION

'Indian Sociology': A Rejoinder

The pitfalls of a non-sociologist trying to take stock of 'an overview of the last half a century of Indian sociology' (p 64) are immediately evident from Kristoffel Leiten's review of Yogendra Singh's *Indian Sociology*¹ The point is not to quibble about disciplinary orientations but to explicate the shoddiness of a review which is ill-informed and even ignores the information that is presented in the book under review

To begin with the book hardly deals with 'half a century of Indian sociology' as Leiten makes out, but focuses primarily 'on the developments in Indian sociology during the period 1970-85'² It considers the contributions of earlier sociologists as setting the perspectives of the contemporary phase of Indian sociology The antecedents of the present developments constitute the context of the substantive discussion in the book Appropriately, Singh does not dwell long on the context, for this was elaborately dealt with in Ramakrishna Mukherjee's earlier trend report on Indian sociology originally published in 1977,³ to which Singh's book is a sequel

Leiten also seems unaware of the fact that Singh's *Modernization of Indian Tradition* was originally published in 1973, as he writes of it being 'published around the same time' (p 65) as the book he is reviewing (i.e., in 1986) Awareness of this would have dispelled his doubts about the veracity of Singh's disposition Even if he had only checked with the bibliography of the book he was reviewing he would have been aware of his own discrepancy

But more important are some of Leiten's sweeping, generalizations about sociology in India which are misleading He writes, 'Much of the weakness of Marxist sociology in India, it is fair to add, is due to the fact that, with the notable exception of A R Desai, it was practically non-existent till the mid-seventies' (p 65) This is an unhistorical assertion Marxist sociology before the mid-1970s, though never a dominant tradition, comprised a significant and innovative trend in Indian sociology The contributions of B N Dutta, D P Mukherjee, K B Krishna, R K Mukherjee, P C Joshi and others can hardly be ignored if one is to understand later developments in Indian sociology. The Marxist sociological trend is not a *sui generis* phenomenon in India.

Leiten further goes on to add that, 'The Marxist contribution of the development of sociology was predominantly by economists such as Utsa Patnaik, Pradhan Prasad, Ashok Rudra, and others' (p 65). This is an intriguing evaluation. The 'mode of production' debate to which Leiten is obviously referring did have a major impact on Marxist scholarship in India and transcended so-called disciplinary boundaries. The contribution of scholars enumerated above were important as Marxists addressing themselves to a seminal enquiry. The 'mode of production' debate was not merely sociological, it was a political question and hence to enclose it within the bounds of particular disciplines would be spurious. If anything, the lessons of that debate seems to have served as an impetus to multi-disciplinary but theoretically grounded research in the social sciences in India. Its legacy can hardly be contained within the artificial boundaries of academic disciplines.

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*State Intervention and Industrial Change:
Towards a Synthesis*

AMIYA KUMAR BAGCHI, *Public Intervention and Industrial Restructuring in China, India and Republic of Korea*, International Labour Organization, Asian Employment Programme (ARTEP), New Delhi, 1987, pp xii + 162

The debate over the relative merits of State intervention and market forces as agents of change, notwithstanding the experience with economic development over the last century and a half suggests that a key feature of capitalist development among late industrializers has been intervention by the State. Though aimed at hastening the process of structural change and industrialization, the nature of such intervention has varied across countries, with results that have also been vastly different. While in some countries intervention of a kind has been eminently successful in providing the spur for rapid and efficient industrialization, there has been an accumulation of evidence that in many centrally planned and market economies, intervention has provided the basis for inefficiencies of various kinds, including uneconomic scales of production, low rates of innovation, low rates of utilization and high input-output ratios. Thus, even an impressionistic survey would suggest that, while intervention is a necessary factor for development, certain kinds of intervention appear both insufficient and counter-productive.

This experience has naturally provided a rather wide agenda for research, resulting in a proliferation of academic treatises on the nature, impact and implications of State intervention among late industrializers. The dominant tendency in this rather prolific area of post-war research has been the view that more often than not, intervention has proved counter-productive and a bad substitute for an imperfect market. Armed with inadequate information and ineffective tools, policy-makers have only been successful in distorting patterns of resource allocation, encouraging monopoly and perpetuating inefficiency—all of which are telling on the level of costs and prices and on the pace of industrialization in these economies. Hence, any process of structural adjustment aimed at restoring a semblance of

efficiency and international competitiveness must begin with the dismantling of controls on production, prices and trade—both domestic and international. This would change 'the relative earnings of agents of production and the relative prices of products produced' and fit industry in the country concerned into the pattern of global comparative advantage.

Needless to say, there is a considerable degree of divergence of opinion on this question. In fact, there is disagreement on the nature of markets itself, with many seeing them as 'complex organizations, bound not just by short-term arm's-length contracts between buyers and sellers, but also by ties of custom, long-term arrangements, by "implicit contracts" between employers and workers, customers and suppliers and perhaps even regulatory agencies and firms.' In such a perspective, the judicious intervention of public agencies could be a necessary characteristic of a well-functioning-market.

It is in this background that the contribution of the monograph under review needs to be assessed. Bagchi's essay is concerned with the nature, rationale and efficacy of intervention, as reflected in the experience of three countries with diverse social and political structures, in order to arrive at an assessment of the role that intervention can play in the process of adjusting to the rather dramatic changes in world trade patterns, technologies and market opportunities over the last couple of decades.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE

The exercise begins with an attempt at conceptualizing the process of structural change and the manner in which it occurs. At the level of the economy as a whole, cross-country experience, while throwing up definite patterns, suggests that the nature of such change has been transformed in the post-war years. In the developed countries, industrialization was initially accompanied by a decline in the share of the primary sector in national income and an increase in that of the secondary and tertiary sectors. However, after World War II, the share of the secondary sector has been on the decline, while that of the tertiary sector has risen rapidly. Some developing countries have been displaying a sequence of development similar to the above. However, in many other developing countries, where the tertiary sector appears unusually large, growth was initially accompanied by a decline in the share of the primary and tertiary sectors in national income, without significantly contributing to employment affecting the primary sector's significantly. Subsequently, the share of the tertiary sector in national income has tended to increase with increases in income at a rate much faster than in the developed countries at comparable stages in their development.

Needless to say, the relative positions and changes in shares of the different sectors depends on the dynamics of change in secondary industry itself. Bagchi surveys the literature based on developed

country experiences, which suggests that, for a number of reasons, industrial change is accompanied by a process of diversification, with the 'dynamic frontier' moving across industries as industrialization occurs and the production of particular industries following a logistic curve. At one level this could occur because of bottle-necks in factor supplies, limits on funds available for expansion as an industry grows or the slackening of technical progress as the potentialities of the basic innovation triggering productivity nears exhaustion. But at another level it could be the result of inevitable changes in demand patterns as income rises—a tendency captured in its rudimentary form by Engels' Law. Further, as the production of consumer goods increases in response to changes in demand, so does the derived demand for intermediates and capital goods, resulting in the more rapid expansion of intermediate and capital goods in the second phase of industrialization. The diversification of demand away from traditional products as income rises provides the basis for diversification as industrialization proceeds.

Implicit in the above conceptualization is the view that domestic demand provides the signal for invention and profitable innovation, with exports being the spill-over from a saturated domestic market. This was the point of departure for the 'Product Cycle Hypothesis', which suggested that when such exporters find the market for their exports in particular countries adequately large, they choose to set up production facilities abroad. And with development resulting in rising labour and other costs in the country which was the original investor, it begins to import the product concerned from the new hosts for investment, and moves on to the production of a new range of products.

THE DEVELOPING COUNTRY CASE

How relevant is this experience from the point of view of the developing countries? And what impact have these developments in the industrialized world had on the opportunities open to them? The assessment here is mixed. It remains true that in any newly industrializing country, the development of new industries would take place 'primarily in response to perceived movements in domestic demand, and the strategy of industrialization pursued in these countries has involved intervention to support such investment. Based on successful import substitution along these lines, some countries may diversify into exports. That is, real increases in income and productivity rather than relative prices are the major determinants of change, especially when scales of production, skill endowments and research and development significantly affect the quality and cost of a product.

But with this the similarity ends. Access to an existing body of technical knowledge and the increased mobility of capital across countries permit newly industrializing countries to 'syncopate' stages of industrialization. And since the process of doing so involves large

investments spread over time, including investments in R & D, State intervention is an inevitable concomitant of industrial restructuring. Such intervention in particular organizational contexts, could, also affect consumption demand and the relative rates of growth of producer goods and other industries.

All this leads up to two generalizations. First, that crucial to an assessment of the industrialization experience of the less developed countries is an examination of the direction, modality and context of State intervention. Second, that in the current phase of the world economy, we should not expect every economy to replicate a given pattern of structural change. History has provided many opportunities, and set up rather different obstacles to these countries, resulting in 'large gaps and tears in the actual industrial structure'. Bagchi's exercise in assessing the comparative development experience of China, India and South Korea is therefore one of bridging the gap between his conceptual apparatus and the reality to be found on the ground.

To do this, what elements of the apparatus of intervention need to be focussed upon? To delineate these, Bagchi looks at the investment decision itself, which includes (i) strategic elements—the choice of product, process, scale and location, and (ii) tactical elements—the organization and day-to-day control of production. The State may not or can intervene to different degrees in decision making with regard to each of these elements in both the private and the public sectors, determining thereby the degree of 'decentralization' in alternative social organizations or even systems. In addition, it can adopt omnibus policies, such as protection through quotas and tariffs, which stimulate domestic production without necessarily giving it a clear strategic direction. The latter most often are spurred by factors other than the need to industrialize per se, for example a balance of payments crunch.

ROLE OF COORDINATOR

By influencing the strategic elements of the investment decision, the State introduces an element of coordination into an environment of atomistic decision making, reducing the adverse effects of 'secondary uncertainty' arising from the lack of knowledge of each other's intentions in such a system. Coordination is achieved both through direct intervention in decision making as well as by setting the 'rules of the game', by specifying laws of contract or guidelines for foreign exchange transactions. Such intervention also reduces the apparent irrationality of omnibus controls. For example, protection could and does lead to monopoly in the domestic market. But monopoly in itself may not be a bad thing if the level of rents is controlled and such rents are utilized in an appropriate manner. In fact, a degree of monopoly may be inevitable in a less developed environment if economies of scale are to be exploited to the full. In fact, there could be situations where, due to collaboration between producers or a perceived difficulty in

obtaining access to an international market, protection leads not to monopoly but the proliferation of small, uneconomical producers. State intervention in decisionmaking may therefore be required to ensure monopoly, in order to exploit to the full the advantages of the available technology.

But the role of the government does not end here. Given its ability to see beyond the narrow horizons of a single decision maker, it also serves as risk bearer through investments in R & D or export market development, and moulds organizational forms (e.g., export cartels) most suited to the long-term interests of domestic industry.

Thus what is crucial when assessing State intervention is not omnibus policies like protection or price control, but particularistic intervention in different areas, which could all add up to a strategy. This implies that arguments which attribute the failure of industrialization strategies to intervention per se which results in distortions that can be rectified only by resorting to decontrol, are based on erroneous conceptions of both the functioning of markets as well as the role of State intervention. On the other hand, putting State intervention on the agenda in itself does not imply that it is either adequate or is of the most appropriate kind. To assess appropriateness or adequacy one needs to go beyond general conceptions and examine the actual experience on the ground. That is Bagchi's concern in the chapters on the three countries that are the raw material for his study.

MODES OF INTERVENTION

In examining the experience of these countries it is necessary to be clear about the ways in which intervention can manifest itself. Besides obvious instruments like taxes, interest rates and subsidies, there could be other less visible mechanisms of ensuring behavioural compliance with government goals. This could involve 'manipulation by government decision makers of the field or opportunity set in which economic agents function', or 'ensuring the choice of particular points or sub-regions within that set by issuing commands'. Needless to say, there can be situations where this can be achieved at the executive's discretion and others where the executive does not exercise much discretion.

THE KOREAN EXPERIENCE

This ability to exercise discretion may perhaps constitute the key difference between an economy like India's and that of South Korea. Under Japanese colonialism, though Korea was a base for substantial Japanese investment, the Koreans themselves were excluded from positions of ownership and decision-making in the manufacturing sector. In addition, a remarkable feature of policy under post-war American domination was the sweeping land reform that included confiscation of land formerly owned by Japanese landlords. In the net, the post-independence Japanese State confronted a society in which

domination through property ownership and the influence that carries was by and large absent. This provided the South Korean State with a great deal of manoeuvrability, permitting it to launch on a strategy of 'guided capitalism', which included the creation of many of South Korea's chaebols.

In Bagchi's words

At the outset of planning and in the 1960s the South Korean government passed a series of laws regulating most areas of economic life, including exports, imports, foreign investment, technology induction, and so on. But government intervention in economic life was often highly particularistic. Particular firms could be directed to do certain things or alter their behaviour in particular ways. Or they might find their bank credit cut off, their foreign exchange allocation stopped, or tax returns scrutinized with unwanted strictness. Although over the years such particularism has diminished as the economy has grown more complex, even now, the government can and does intervene in a very particularistic manner. For example, in 1981, the government forced Kia out of the passenger car business as part of its heavy industry reorganization. In return, the debt-ridden Kia was given a monopoly in 1-ton to 4.5-ton trucks.

This strategy was utilized not merely to encourage the development of export industries, but through support with a complicated system of tariffs and quota restrictions, industries which would replace imports.

Needless to say, this particularistic intervention was combined with a macroeconomic policy that exploited above all, South Korea's close relation with the United States, which provided access in the form of aid and commercial borrowing to large volumes of foreign capital, and to technology and markets. The government not merely shifted assets and incomes in favour of profit earners, leading to a high level of concentration of assets in the manufacturing sector in a relatively short period of time, but through use of interest rate policy and informal methods of enforcement (that earned the system the 'Korea Inc.' tag), ensured investment of these profits and borrowing from State controlled banks in avenues it considered desirable within the framework of such a strategy. If such a strategy in the initial years proved expensive in a foreign exchange sense, the advantages that the country had by virtue of its government's special relationship with the US and Japan could be exploited to overcome the problem.

This did not mean that South Korea generated an industry that was 'dependent' in an immediate sense. Though foreign investment and technology did play a role, 'South Korea has adopted a sequential approach to the import and development of technology, starting from importing packages of technology and foreign experts to install them and now emerging as an investor in frontline areas of technology

development such as semiconductors ' Besides regulations that allowed majority or wholly foreign owned enterprises only when it was felt that it would otherwise not be feasible to obtain particular technologies, the government provided support to this sequential approach by investing in R & D and inducing the private sector to do so as well. These policies, among others, underlie South Korea's 'precocious industrialization'

THE INDIAN VARIANT

Unlike in the Republic of Korea, the dominance of the executive in India over the rest of society does not appear to be as near absolute, reducing its ability to either manipulate the field or issue commands to enforce compliance. A gradual process of industrialization, involving a shift to factory production as far back as 1854, gathered momentum in the first half of the twentieth century, and ensured the emergence of a relatively strong and independent capitalist class by Independence. That class, through its representatives who formulated the Bombay Plan in 1944, had made clear its views on the directions that post-Independence development should take. Since the post-Independence State, which came to power in the wake of a mass-based freedom struggle, had to represent the interests of a rather diverse set of conflicting classes, it needed to maintain a degree of autonomy from the dominant sections of society as well as make an effort at remedying the extremely unequal distribution of assets and incomes in the country.

In the net, unlike in South Korea, there was an element of 'distance' between the government and industry. Yet the relation was dependent. While the government needed private industry to achieve its aims of rapid industrialization without too adversely affecting the existing unequal distribution of assets and incomes, the private corporate sector needed the government to 'protect' it from powerful foreign competitors, to provide it with the means to channel finance from saving households to the corporate sector and to invest in the infrastructure that, though crucial to industrialization, involved lumpy investments, long gestation lags and risks of a kind that made it 'unsuitable' for profit-oriented private investment.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE STATE

While the private sector's perception of the role the State should adopt was reflected in the Bombay Plan, the government's own role was reflected in periodic statements from official sources. In Nehru's own words

I have no doubt that, if we say 'lop off the private sector', we cannot replace it adequately. We have not got the resources to replace it, and the result would be that our productive apparatus will suffer. And why should we do it? I don't understand. We have our industries, and there is a vast sector, and we have to work it. Let the State go on

building up its plants and industries as far as its resources permit. Why should we fritter our energy in pushing out somebody who is doing it in the private sector?

There is no reason except that the private sector may build up monopoly, might be building economic power to come in the way of our growth. I can understand 'Prevent that, control that, plan for that', but where there is such a vast field to cover, it is foolish to take charge of the whole field when you are totally incapable of using that large area yourself. Therefore, you must not only permit the private sector, but, I say, encourage it in its own field.

This sums up the perception of the role the private sector must play and the type of regulation it must be subject to that underlay the formulation of industrial strategy in India. The aim was not so much to take private industry along a path the State considered appropriate, but to restrict its field of opportunity as well as control its adverse effects on society as a whole, leading to the gamut of policies that Bagchi briefly surveys in his discussion of the Indian experience. Protection for small and cottage industries to guard against the erosion of opportunities for employment, controls on monopoly and foreign investment, regulation of capacity creation through licensing, and emphasis on the creation of a public sector have all combined to create the image of a high degree of State intervention. This has had two effects. First, given the 'distance' between the government and the private sector, the tendency of the latter has been to devise elaborate strategies aimed at evading or defeating government controls, which have been quite successful in many areas, leading to the charge that controls have not been effective. And second, most controls in India have been of an omnibus nature, with little resort to particularistic intervention in individual investment decisions towards the realization of common goals, resulting in an inability on the part of the government to pre-empt inefficient investment decisions as reflected in the choice of product, technology and scale.

That is, in the Indian case, controls largely attempt to manipulate the field and scope of operation of private enterprise, rather than influence through direct commands the actual nature of micro-level investment decisions. As a result, the advantages of the kind of coordination possible in the South Korean case were not realized. On the other hand, there was growing evidence that, while controls neither helped curb monopoly nor channel investment in planned directions, it was contributing substantially to the growing inefficiency in Indian industry. Ad hoc decisions not often based on economic criteria, excessive concentration of decision-making with centralized committees and the belief that the size of plant licensed was the major mechanism to control the effects of monopoly, resulted in inefficient investment decisions, including the licensing of plants of uneconomic scales. The latter problem was, in some instances, aggravated by the

need to distribute licenses for a given targeted output to units with fragmented capacity distributed across the country, in order to display 'fairness' from a regional point of view. In the net, licensing contributed to the inherent tendency in a protected and monopolized system towards inadequate cost consciousness when making investment decisions, especially in industries characterized by economies of scale. Added to this were the delays that a cumbersome licensing regime resulted in and the consequent impact they had on project costs and investment intentions.

THE NATURE OF ADJUSTMENT

So long as the stimulus provided by import substitution and public investment was adequate to sustain a high rate of industrial growth, many of these inadequacies of the control system were ignored. However, when after the mid-1960s, industry entered a phase of secular stagnation, with import substitution possibilities having exhausted themselves and public investment on the decline, the adverse effects of control and regulation became the culprits that were nailed as explanations for poor industrial performance.

In the process of adjustment that has evolved since then and gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, the removal of these controls that have been held directly responsible for inefficiency has led the agenda. Increasingly, the problem of adjustment is being posed in terms of the relative roles of intervention and the market, rather than in terms of alternative modes and directions of intervention. Bagchi delineates some of these trends, and expresses more than a modicum of scepticism. His reasons are manifold. First, unlike South Korea, India may not have access to international funding of a magnitude that may be adequate, leading to balance of payments problems in the wake of liberalisation. Second, the possible adverse impact on employment of a process of market-based adjustment may be difficult to justify in a country where a large section of the population is already at the margin of existence. Thirdly, it is unclear whether in a situation where there is no automatic assurance of a growing market, the package of policies adopted by the government would generate enough confidence among private investors to induce them to significantly step up investment. All this suggests that posing the problem in terms of the State-market dichotomy is both conceptually weak and practically inadequate in an India-type economy where private investment decisions play a crucial role in determining the pace and pattern of industrial growth.

THE SOCIALIST EXAMPLE

The State-market dichotomy is an inadequate axis for analysis of the process of adjustment initiated in many socialist economies as well. In the period between 1951 and 1952, China, for example, attempted a rather major development effort involving raising the rate of

accumulation substantially, with such accumulation having averaged 28.2 per cent over these years and having touched the 40 per cent mark in the 1959-60 period. In this effort China sought to control the direction of its investment, resulting in a relatively higher rate of growth of the capital and intermediate goods sectors. Simultaneously, the system ensured full employment of its population and assured them of the 'iron rice bowl', a guaranteed minimum level of living throughout life. However, this experience of growth, through a highly regulated and centrally guided system, has not been without its problems. The most obvious have been the slow rate of growth of agriculture and the system's inability to sustain adequate increases in productivity per worker in the agricultural sector. In fact, 'the guarantee of full employment and the tendency of all large enterprises to internalize as many linkages as possible have led to "extensive" rather than "intensive" growth and often led not only to temporary waste but to a system of wasteful utilization of capital goods, raw materials and labour.' In addition, given the excessive preference for heavy industry, a distorted production structure was created.

Problems of this kind have, in Bagchi's view, been the motive force behind the current efforts at restructuring production in the People's Republic of China. Two elements have no doubt been important components of this reform. First, a degree of decentralization. And second, use of market signals as part of this process of decentralisation. But these, according to Bagchi, are by no means the backbone of the reform. Rather, the effort is concentrated on evolving specific contracts between government and the enterprise, between workers/peasants and teams/brigades or collectives/State enterprises. These examples of the new 'responsibility system' are really adjuncts to or even substitutes to the market mechanism. In addition, though there have been instances of decentralization of decision making, 'more centralized control over certain decisions have been considered necessary in order to achieve the desired ratio of accumulation to consumption, and the desired degree of flexibility in the economy.'

There are no doubt constraints to the realization of reform programmes, which Bagchi has delineated in great detail. First, the fact that economic decentralization has been accompanied by an 'unplanned' increase in capital construction, blocked earlier for lack of centrally allocated funds, resulting in a slowing down in the process of restructuring production away from heavy industry. Second, the inflationary potential associated with reform of the price system, aimed at permitting a modicum of enterprise level flexibility in price setting and of raising the prices of certain products (agricultural, for example) to redress distributional imbalances. Third, the danger of open employment, particularly in the urban areas, which may not be fully mitigated by the surge in farm output in the wake of the reform and the new opportunities for self-employment in the agricultural and service sectors. Fourth, increases in wage and income differentials,

inevitable in an environment where economic incentives are stressed and greater flexibility in determining payments and rewards is provided to lower level decision making units. Finally, the possibility of widening trade deficits in a situation where the goal of raising the rate of growth of light industry is being pursued with the help of large-scale imports of equipment and technology.

CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM

While there are signs that each of these factors has come into play since the beginning of the reform, Bagchi's empirical assessment, not all of which is provided given the limitation to the extent of detail that can be incorporated in a monograph, appears to provide cause for optimism. This optimism is also strengthened by his analysis of Chinese policies towards the import of capital and technology, which emphasize the adaptation and internal transfer of imported technologies.

Thus the monograph treads the 'middle path' in the assessment of Chinese economic reform. It disputes the claim of a fundamental discontinuity in Chinese economic policy after 1978 and holds that the Chinese policy makers have not swung in favour of 'market socialism', but rather 'opted for retaining the basic structure of central control and for encouraging enterprises to adopt a system of interlocking contracts'. And while accepting the difficulties associated with implementing the reform, it suggests that awareness at the level of the policy maker has helped moderate and stave off the adverse effects that the transition to a more rational economic structure could result in.

The perception underlying this assessment is that attempts at capturing the essence of the reform in China in terms of the State vs. market dichotomy misread the problem confronting the policy maker and the complex nature of the solutions being proposed. The futility of pursuing an analysis based on this dichotomy set up by mainstream economics and the need for innovative appraisals of the role of the State, is in fact, the unifying principle that permits an understanding of the role and character of State intervention in the three socially and economically diverse cases that Bagchi has chosen for study. That principle not merely constitutes the most illuminating insight of this little book with an extremely large canvas, but also paves the way for a new synthesis when locating the role of the State as an agent of change in the developing world.

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Pledge for National Unity and Integrity

Even after 40 years of Independence our cherished goal of a society free from poverty and exploitation remains unfulfilled. Unity, equality and fraternity among different groups of people are yet to be achieved. The result is frenzy of disharmony—racial, lingual and religious at various places and violent secessionist forces endangering integrity of our country. The grave situation is further exploited by the anti-people imperialist powers.

Only unified struggle of the working class can fight out poverty and exploitation. Disunity, divisiveness and secessionism based on race, religion and language are thwarting our efforts towards the prime objective.

On this **Independence Day** let us re-affirm our pledge to preserve national unity, integrity and communal harmony.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

A Study of the Factors that Led to the Outbreak of Famines in Chingleput District of Tamilnadu during the Nineteenth Century B.S. Chandra Babu	3
The Economic History of Sambhalpur District 1849-1947: An Introduction Balgovind Baboo	26
The Ryotwari Land Revenue Settlements and Peasant Resis- tance in the Northern Division of Arcot of the Madras Presi- dency during Early British Rule Subramanya Reddy	35
Agricultural Backwardness of Malabar during the Colonial Period: An Analysis of Economic Causes B.A. Prakash	51
Liaquat Ali Khan's Budget of 1947-48: The Tryst with Destiny Raghabendra Chattopadhyay	77
Book Review	90

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1 A Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977

2 See R Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', *Journal of Comparative Economics* December 1979, pp 325-45

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Editorial Note

The current issue of *Social Scientist* contains a number of case studies, dealing with particular regions, which highlight the process of colonialisation of the Indian economy and its consequences. The main ingredients of this process of colonialisation are of course well known though, of late, much debated, viz. the substitution of a tax on produce by a tax on land, increasing the overall tax burden on the producers; the insistence upon tax-payments in cash, the introduction of unprecedented rigidity with regard to the timing of tax-payments, the institution of legally enforceable contracts and property-rights, large-scale commoditisation of the economy together with its exposure to the ravages of international commerce through which burgeoning industrial capitalism in the West destroyed a good deal of domestic craft-production; and the fostering of a whole new class of parasitic intermediaries who took advantage of the new institutions to stake a claim of their own for a share of the surplus. The consequences of this process were a greatly increased squeeze on the direct producers, resulting on the one hand in recurring famines, and on the other hand in recurring peasant revolts, and a general shifting of the growth of productive forces. While each article in this issue does not dwell upon all these themes, they together create a picture of the colonialisation process which is worth recapitulating all over again precisely because it is no longer modish.

That colonial oppression represented a qualitatively different and altogether new phenomenon, and was resisted initially by the united strength of the old society, is emphasised in the paper by D. Subramanyam Reddy dealing with the Northern Division of Arcot in the Madras Presidency. The *ryotwari* settlement, which is often portrayed by colonial spokesmen as an attempt by a benevolent state to free the direct producers from the burden of having to maintain a host of intermediaries, was in fact motivated by the desire to maximise revenue by the colonial regime. In North Arcot this regime appropriated for itself a part of the claims which the *poligars* had on the produce in the earlier years, in addition it also jacked up the amount which the *ryots* had to pay. The result was to alienate both the *poligars* and the *ryots*, and to precipitate a revolt in which all sections of the people participated in varying degrees.

B.S. Chandra Babu's paper on famines in Chingleput district in the nineteenth century brings out clearly the link between the process of colonialisation and the outbreak of famines. These famines were not the result of the failure of monsoons, and the consequent food availability decline, in particular years. Monsoon failures *per se* precipitated famines only in a situation where the economy had been colonialised, where distress of the people had become an endemic phenomenon. The draconian land tax-squeeze, supplemented by the burdens imposed by the new class of parasitic middlemen, had resulted in a perpetuation of agricultural backwardness. This, together with the striking employment opportunities on account of 'de-industrialisation', had created a vast pauperised mass which fell prey to recurrent famines whenever food availability declined.

The theme of agricultural backwardness also figures in the paper by B.A. Prakash and Bal Govind Baboo. Agriculture in Malabar, according to Prakash, remained backward notwithstanding the fact that areas under cultivation of various crops showed an increase in the colonial period. In tracing the causes of this, apart from drawing attention to the debilitating impact of colonial exactions, the author also underscores the role of social institutions such as the caste-system, and the inheritance rules followed by the dominant land-owning castes. Baboo's paper on Sambalpur is noteworthy, among other things, for joining issue with those who have argued that the collection of rent and cess in cash has the effect of enhancing the cultivation of commercial crops; he finds little evidence for this proposition in his study of Sambalpur district.

The paper by Raghavendra Chattopadhyay deals with a different theme, namely the dialectics of the interaction between the big bourgeoisie and the Congress leadership, as exemplified by the response to the budget proposals of a populist nature presented by Liaquat Ali Khan in 1947-48. The calculations and reactions of each of the various groups, namely the Muslim League, the big bourgeoisie and its supporters within the Congress, the radical elements within and outside the Congress, and the elements represented by Nehru, make the 1947-48 budget a fascinating episode.

B S CHANDRA BABU *

A Study of the Factors that Led to the Outbreak of Famines in Chingleput District of Tamilnadu During the Nineteenth Century

No decade of the nineteenth century except the 1890s was untouched by famine or scarcity in South India ¹ In Tamil Nadu, ² for example, there occurred seven famines and several scarcities Chingleput, ³ one of the districts of Tamil Nadu, was no exception to this trend. Five famines and three scarcities were recorded in the district during that period. ⁴

The Chamber's Encyclopaedia defines 'famine' as a situation of 'lack of food over a large geographical area sufficiently long and severe to cause widespread disease and death from starvation' ⁵ This definition captures the intensity of distress experienced by the people of Chingleput district during these calamities This district was also visited by such famines thrice during the eighteenth century The following were the specific causes attributed by the Britishers for each of these calamities ⁶

Table 1. Causes for the Outbreak of Famine

Years in which famines occurred	Cause for the outbreak
1733	Neglect of Irrigation
1780	Ravages of the Mysore troops
1785	Extraordinary floods

Similarly, it was maintained by the colonial Government that the famines that occurred in 1807, 1824, 1833, 1876-78 and in 1891 in the district of Chingleput, were due to insufficient rainfall or other unfavourable natural causes Susceptibility to famine is, of course, to be expected in any district where agriculture was dependent upon the monsoon and the extent of poverty quite severe What is noteworthy, however, is that despite its proximity to the city of Madras (the capital city of the Madras Presidency) and the consequent advantages it enjoyed, such calamities were frequently reported in the district sug-

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gesting that a host of other factors must have come into play. This study, besides focusing on basic factors that led to the outbreak of famines in the district of Chingleput, such as the soils of the region (which was comparatively poor)⁷ and the available irrigation potential and their impact on production and cultivation, also deals with the social and economic factors that led to the emergence of famine conditions, the challenges they posed and the nature of the response from the colonial administration

NATURAL OR GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS

The boundaries of Chingleput district during the nineteenth century were the Bay of Bengal in the east, Nellore in the north, Arcot in the south and North Arcot in the west. Madras was the nearest city. This proximity, while advantageous in terms of the positive fallout of urban economic activity, also brought with it the disadvantages associated with the domination of urban economic activity over a region.

Soils, Cultivation Practices and Productivity

The soils of Chingleput district rarely proved fertile. Among the officially classified four types of soil, namely, permanently improved, alluvial, red ferruginous and arenaceous or sandy, the first two were declared suitable for cultivation and the other two as lacking in terms of productivity.⁸ Even the alluvial soil (coloured brown) which occurs in regions characterised by a hot and dry climate and low rainfall, soon loses its moisture and becomes baked, rendering the area dependent on irrigation, especially where the alluvium (or mixture of sand and clay) is sandy rather than clayey in character.⁹ The red ferruginous soil is by far the most common in the district. This soil was highly infertile and typical of barren areas where there was no vegetation. It was utilized for road-making. It is due to this that some tracts of land had to remain uncultivated. However, waste and arid lands were brought under cultivation, and the 1,70,056 acres cultivated in 1928-29¹⁰ rose to 5,05,000 acres in 1889-90.¹¹

The cultivation practices followed by the agriculturists of the district were rather primitive and backward. Cultivable land was classified as *Nunjai* (wet land) and *Punjai* (dry land) and while paddy was cultivated on the former, *varagu*, *ragi*, pulses, etc., were cultivated on the latter. There were two modes in which paddy was cultivated. *Sethukkal* (sprouted seed cultivation) and *Pulithikkal* (dry seed cultivation).¹² In the first (*Sethukkal*) the land was irrigated by water from tanks and channels, ploughed four or five times and manured with leaves, plants, dung, ashes, etc. The seed corn is put into a pot and steeped in water. When paddy as well as other *Punjai* grains were cultivated, the *Pulithikkal* mode of cultivation was adopted. In this case, the fields are turned up when moist after rain. sheep and cattle are folded on them either after or before ploughing or else accumulated heaps of dung and ashes are mixed with the soil, seeds are sown when

the soil is still moist and after the seeds sprout the fields are kept constantly weeded. The principal points of difference between *Pulithikkal* and *Settukkal* are that the former does not require irrigation for two months after sowing, and thereby affords greater facilities for cattle than the latter at the time of ploughing.

Cultivation in the district was heavily depended on animal power. No breed of cattle was peculiar to Chingleput. Those raised locally were mostly inferior as there were few good grazing grounds.¹³ The goats and sheep were of the ordinary varieties. In Ponneri taluk alone in 1871-72, the total number of ploughing cattle was estimated at 15,143. This rose to 16,034 in 1878.¹⁴ Despite this increase, in 1877 there were complaints of want of ploughing cattle in the district as a whole.¹⁵ This was probably due to the death of numerous cattle for want of fodder. Straw formed the only or the principal fodder of the cattle. Straw and cow dung (the latter in the shape of bratties for fuel) were carried off to Madras where they commanded a ready market.¹⁶ The farm stock was thus left without the fodder required during the dry season to pick up what sustenance it could on the arid plains around the villages, and the soil was deprived of its productive power. Traditional modes of cultivation coupled with the continuous overuse of land could explain the decline in yield per acre during the eighteenth century (Table 2).¹⁷ The same decreasing trend in the productive capacity of land may have occurred in the nineteenth century as well as no efforts were taken to improve the fertility of land, though there must exist a floor to the level of yield per acre.¹⁸

Table 2 Trends in Yield Per Acre

Year	Yield per acre in lbs
(a) 1788	2610
(b) 1796-97	830
(c) 1797-98	896
(d) 1798-99	696

Hills and Forests

The higher productivity of land would have been maintained if the district had been endowed with some hills and forests. They, apart from preventing soil erosion, play an important role in influencing monsoons and the temperature of a region.¹⁹ In Chingleput district the only hills worthy of mention are the Nagalapuram Hills. The people of Chingleput were thus faced with a 'natural disadvantage'.

Rivers or Streams

Added to this was the fact that Chingleput district was not too well endowed with rivers or streams that could serve as a source of supply of water for irrigation. There were a few streams like the Palar, Cortelliar, Cheyyar, Narnavaram, Cooum, Nagari and Adayar, of

which only the Palar was of any significance. Fifty to sixty miles long, the Palar river extended 20 to 30 miles west of Conjeevaram to the sea. Table 3 shows the extent of area cultivated by these rivers and the innumerable tanks built across their flow.²⁰ It should be clear that the percentage of area irrigated by these rivers was comparatively low, leaving most of the area at the mercy of the monsoons. Even this irrigation was dependent on rainfall. In the absence of rain and in the absence any artificial remedies, no attempt at increasing the cultivated area in the district could have proved successful.

Table 3 Area Irrigated by River Water

Sl No	Year	Area Irrigated Acres	Total lands cultivated Acres	Percentage Irrigated in relation to Col 4
1	1869-70	2,03,568	19,25,760	9.5%
2	1882-83	3,67,378	28,42,000	7.7%

Rainfall

As in the rest of Tamil Nadu, agriculture in the district of Chingleput depended on the north-east and south-west monsoons. In fact, it could be deduced from the available evidence that the rainfall in the district was neither copious nor very regular. Rainfall averaged about 45" during the year, though this varied across localities.²¹ This was because the greater part of the annual supply was received from the north-east monsoon, which parted with some of its moisture by the time it traversed to the eastern side of the district. Rainfall sufficient for cultivation usually was not available in April and May.²² During the south-west monsoon (Jun to Sep) the early 'dry' crops were grown. However, much of the cultivation was carried out with the north-east rains, which were supposed to fill the tanks and enable the 'wet' or irrigated crop to be raised. But when these monsoons failed, the consequences were scarcities. Famines occurred in Chingleput district when the rainfall recorded in the district was far below the average. From the table on the next page it may be seen how the failure of rains preceded and resulted in the outbreak of famines in the district.²³

Table 4 Rainfall Recorded in Pre-Famine Years

Sl No	Famine Years	Years before the outbreak	Rainfall recorded (in inches)
1	1807	1806	Not available
2	1824	1823	26.62
3	1833	1833	18.45
4	1876-78	1875-76, 1876	28.48, 19.3
5	1891	1890	30.29

In addition to famines, the years 1867-68, 1868-69 and 1900-01 were declared as 'scarcity years' in the district²⁴ British officials conveniently attributed these scarcities to the failure of rains. The first two scarcities took place when the rainfall recorded was 20.46" (1865-66), 38.59" (1866-67), 20.46" (1867-68) and 16.3" (1868-69).

Even if British records are trusted and their method of attributing causes for the outbreak of such calamities are accepted, one cannot but note from the available evidence the weakness inherent in their argument. If the failure of rains alone was held responsible for the occurrence of such famines and scarcities, the year (1868-69) in which the rainfall recorded stood at 16.33" should have been more distress-ridden than the famine of 1833 which was due to the low rainfall (18.45") in 1832. So also, notwithstanding the fact that recorded rainfall stood at 26.62" and 20.46" respectively, the years 1823 and 1867-68 were clearly years of famine and scarcity. In fact, it was not the failure of rains that was solely responsible for the outbreak of famines but the intensity of distress which was the result of other human and institutional factors. If the Government had not been colonial in character, the natural or geographical needs of the district would have been met to a certain extent, by way of improving the supply of water through channels and other means of irrigation to the drier tracts of the district and by way of preserving the forests and creating 'reserves' of wood and 'fodder'.²⁵

SOCIAL FACTORS

To attempt a study of the social factors that determined the actual social status or condition of different sections of society in Chingleput district during the nineteenth century, we could begin by distinguishing between the agricultural and non-agricultural population, for a dominant section had agriculture as its main occupation.

The Structure of Agrarian Society

The agricultural population of the district comprised of *mirasdars*, *zamindars*, *inamdars*, landlords or rich peasants, small land-owners and landless agriculturists, namely *payakaris* (tenants) *pannaiyals* (farm servants), *padiyals* (seasonal agricultural labourers) and free agricultural labourers. On the other hand, weavers, artisans and non-farm workers of different kinds formed the non-agricultural population of the district. But they too undertook jobs that were related to agriculture.

It has been estimated that during the period 1881-91, the agriculturists constituted 70.9 per cent of the total population in the district. Among them 42.9 per cent were land holders and 57.1 per cent were landless labourers and tenants.²⁶ Throughout the nineteenth century the distribution of the agricultural population remained more or less the same. This was so because of the following factors (1) Though the decay of the handloom industry in the latter half of the

nineteenth century threw many weavers out of employment,²⁷ they did not swell the ranks of the landless agricultural population because at around that time the Government of Madras had started the Madras Irrigation and Canal Company,²⁸ the Railway Works and other public works and absorbed a considerable number of landless labourers in the district on wages. In this way, it allowed the percentage of landless agriculturalists to remain more or less the same during the nineteenth century. (2) Though the ryotwari land system succeeded to a certain extent in creating small land owners in the district, in due course of time their lands were expropriated in lieu of their debts for which the excessive land tax and the increased cost of living were also held responsible. That is, the socio-economic development of agrarian society, which worked to the advantage of the rural rich, kept the percentage of land owners in the district at more or less the same level.

It appears that the mortality spread of the frequent occurrence of famines and scarcities in the district did not influence the distribution of the population as reflected in official statistics. Despite improved methods of census taking, increased rate of growth of population and institution of relief works during the second half of the nineteenth century, it has been reported that by the end of the 1876 famine nearly 10 per cent of the population of the district was lost.²⁹ It could be easily conceived that during the first half of the nineteenth century, in the absence of government's direct transaction with the people, there could have occurred more deaths, as is evidenced by the decreased rate of growth of population during the period.³⁰ In more simplistic perceptions of the problems of the time, the increase in population has been held responsible for famines. This was based on the fact that, in the absence of industry, the increase in population from 2,71,332 in 1800 to 13,10,106 in 1901,³¹ had to fall back on agriculture for its livelihood.

The new land system introduced by the British in stages in the district had not brought any major change in the position of those with little or no means. Whereas the *zamindari* or *mirasidari* system made the landlords masters of the village communities, the ryotwari system cut through the heart of the village communities by making separate arrangements between each peasant and the state. The latter land system was radical to that extent. On the other hand, given the manner in which the ryotwari land system functioned, with little adherence to the principle of 'land to the tiller', the result was that both *zamindari* and ryotwari were only two different juridical versions of the same feudal landlordism.

The British Government, to accomplish their political ends, had however allowed the *zamindari*, *mirasdari* and *inamdari* systems to persist, but not with the same social status and prestige as before. In fact, their prominence in society was determined by their hereditary right over the lands of their predecessors. Still, wherever traditional landlordism was in vogue, irrigation and land were considered the private property of the landlords. Nevertheless, the Government

exercised some vigilance over them.³² Unlike the *zamindars*, the *mirasdars* had full hereditary occupancy right over the lands, stones, trees, etc coming under their jurisdiction. So, when there were large tracts of land lying waste and when the landless *payakaris* applied to the revenue authorities to cultivate it, the *mirasdars* opposed their entrance and exercised their right to take over the land themselves.³³ The Government in turn had expressed its inability to interfere.

The waste land in this country, in the villages of the plains at least, is certainly not the property of Government or the state in the absolute sense in which the unoccupied land in the USA and some of the British colonies is so. The village communities claim an interest in it and that interest has been universally admitted though not accurately defined. To put up the waste to sale, entirely ignoring that prior right of the village communities, would be to introduce a totally new practice and it would certainly be regarded by the common feeling of the country as an invasion of existing rights.³⁴

So with this inducement, the *mirasdars*, even contrary to the Government's interest, asserted their rights, ably received remissions for their preventable waste and deprived the landless agriculturists of their only possible means of possession of land.³⁵ Similarly, the Government's approach to the traditional institutions like *inamdari* was such that it allowed the *inamdars*, namely the priests, artisans, barbers, dhobies, etc., to till their lands without being taxed by the Government. However, the Government had made several attempts to claim the lands of the dead *inamdars*, but in vain.³⁶

In the wake of the ryotwari land system and the consequent 'monetisation' of agriculture, a new class of middlemen and the phenomenon of absentee landlordism emerged in the rural economy.³⁷ Once land became a commodity, the ease with which it could be transferred afforded an opportunity to the well-to-do to purchase landed estates and have them cultivated by tenants of the district.

Payakaris, or tenants-at-will, cultivated the land owners' lands for a year or a longer period, according to the arrangement. At the expiry of their lease they were liable to eviction and their rents to enhancement. In fact, they had no occupancy right on their part, more so when they cultivated the land of absentee landlords.³⁸ Among the *panniyals*, *padiyals* and other free labourers in agriculture, the first two were ignominiously attached to land and the master. During the first half of the nineteenth century there were instances of their being treated as slaves by their masters. As early as 1836 the Magistrate of Chingleput was reporting the recognition of the master's right to sell or mortgage his *adimai* (slave), cases were disposed of according to 'the laws' of each class.³⁹ But in the second half of the nineteenth century, the public works started by the Government, by offering some alternative employment, had created a sense of self-respect among the

adimaïs Also, the proximity of the city with some of its merits, at least to the people living in the adjacent areas, would have given the agriculturists freedom. So, during this period the existence of slavery in the agricultural sector may have been reduced considerably.

Unlike *payakaris*, *pannaiyals* and *padiyals*, there were labourers free to contract or cease, who did agricultural and non-agricultural work, like in the public works undertaken in the district. Whenever there was work they earned their wages and when there was none, they remained idle. Money-lenders could not come to their rescue given the uncertainty of their earnings. Apart from these, almost all the landless agricultural labourers had no education,⁴⁰ as primary education in the district was completely neglected by the Government till 1860.⁴¹ However, the rich and the well-to-do could afford to send their children to the presidency town for education. The lack of public consciousness among the poor and insufficient educational opportunities kept them fully ignorant.

Among the non-agricultural population, the weavers were the most important, as they worked for the fulfilment of one of the three basic necessities of life. During the first half of the nineteenth century, they received help and incentives from the East India Company and from *zamindars* and *mirasdars* of the district.⁴² But with the onslaught of mill-made textiles, this industry gradually began to decay. On the other hand, the artisans engaged in work related to agriculture, though in constant demand, earned little more than subsistence wages, as the agricultural sector in its depressed state could not afford to pay. Thus, the social structure perpetrated by the British ensured that the 'well to do' in the district obtained the required social status by sheer dint of hereditary rights over land, while those who were the real backbone of both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors suffered

ECONOMIC FACTORS

During the nineteenth century, land revenue was the principal source of revenue for the Government of India. The district of Chingleput handed the major share of its land revenue to the provincial economy. Gradually, but rapidly the proportion of land revenue to the total revenue increased in the district. This is illustrated by Table 5.⁴³

The increase in land revenue was the result of the conscious efforts made by the British to improve the finances of the state and as a consequence the district was subjected to periodical settlements during the nineteenth century. In fact, the Permanent Settlement in 1801-1802, Ryotwari Settlement in certain portions of the district in 1803, and the new settlement covering the entire district in 1875-79, were introduced by the Government from the village to the taluk level in various stages. In all, 'land revenue increase' alone seemed to have been the main motive of the British, as evidenced by the figures in Table 5.

Table 5 Land and Total Revenue

Year	Land Revenue			Total Revenue		
	Rs	A	Ps	Rs	A	Ps
1832-33	7,25,307	02	00	13,68,484	02	00
1850-51	9,08,274	10	09	13,38,704	04	01
1871-71	13,34,738	11	02	43,38,669	07	07**
1881-86	15,30,292	00	00	16,15,957	00	00
	(Average)			(Average)		

* This phenomenal increase in total revenue of the district was partly due to lucrative trade in salt

When the Permanent Settlement was introduced in the district, several villages forming many estates of the district were sold on auction to the highest bidder who in turn had to pay a fixed land revenue to the Government. This fixed amount was based on an examination of the condition of each village in respect of ploughs, live-stock, means of irrigation and fertility, checked by reference to the accounts of ten years prior and subsequent to 1780, and the revenue of 1798-99. Also, as soon as the Ryotwari System was introduced in 1803 in the district the lands were surveyed and classified into 'wet' 'dry' and 'garden', the two former being further sub-divided into grades in accordance with their soil. The rates of assessment were arrived at by taking the estimated average turnover of each field in 10 years, deducting 20 per cent for cultivation expenses and then apportioning the residue equally between the Government and the ryot.⁴⁴ The Government's share was then converted into a money equivalent. Encouraged by these results, a resettlement was implemented in the district between 1875 and 1879 after proper survey. Thereafter, half of the net produce was fixed as an average assessment per acre.

These periodical settlements, instead of improving the condition of the people dependent on agriculture, bred poverty due to their increased rates of assessment.⁴⁵ Actually, the Permanent Settlement had worked unsatisfactorily as it contained no provision allowing for remissions during bad seasons. It is due to the excessive amounts to be paid by the bidders to the Government that the farmers were at times forced to sell their estates.⁴⁶ Similarly, the land revenue demand of the Ryotwari Settlements seemed high when compared to the average yield per acre and the prevalent price of foodgrains during the period. While assessing lands, the irrigation facilities accruing to the lands were also calculated, with irrigation charges being most often consolidated with land revenue.

Taking the 1870s as the standard, when the average yield per acre (both wet and dry crops combined) was approximately estimated at 675 lbs or 317 kilos,⁴⁷ the average prices of staple foodgrains, namely, rice, cholam, ragi and cumbu, for different years are provided in Table 6. Based on these figures the actual income from an acre of land can also be estimated. The Table shows the prices in terms of seers of 80 tolas or

12 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

9/10 kilo per rupee and income per acre to the owner, excluding that in famine years⁴⁸ There is a contention that the increase in land brought under cultivation would justify the rate of assessment in the nineteenth century Presuming reasonably that the year 1850-51 represents roughly the period prior to 1850, and 1880-81 the period after the 1850s, Table 7 falsifies the prevalent contention, as the incidence of the tax per acre increased disproportionately.⁴⁹

Table 6 Yield and Income per Acre of Land Under Different Crops

YEARS	1809 to 1823	1819 to 1823	1828 to 1832	1849 to 1853	1861 to 1865	1870 to 1874	1883-84 to 1887-88
Rice (II sort) Income per acre to the Owner	22 9 6-0-0	26 4 5-5-0	26 3 5-5-0	32 4 4-6-6	13 3 11-3-0	17 6 8-0-0	16 2 8-11-0
Cholam (Seers) Income per acre to the Owner	30 9 4-9-0	32 7 4-10-3	35 3 4-0-0	44 6 3-3-0	21 1 7-11-0	22 6 6-0-0	22 8 6-0-0
Ragi (Seers) Income per acre to the Owner	31 5 4-6-6	30 1 4-11-0	32 0 4-6-6	41 8 3-6-0	20 8 7-0-0	28 5 4-14-6	27 3 5-3-0
Cumbu (Seers) Income per acre to the Owner	37 9 3-11-6	37 5 3-12-0	39 2 3-9-0	46 3 3-0-7	20 7 6-15-6	24 2 5-13-0	21 5 6-10-9

Table 7 Incidence of Tax Per Acre

Year	Total lands cultivated per acre	Land Revenue	Incidence of tax (acres)
		Rs A P	Rs A P
1850-51	2,14,933	9,08,214-10-9	4-3-0*
1880-81	4,29,000	21,90,000-0-0	5-1-6*

* The average is calculated after the statistics given in *supra* under 'Economic Factor'

Also there is a possible argument in favour of the Government's policy of assessing or fixing the land revenue. It is true, there was a difference between the rate of assessment and the subsequent collection. Not always was this so pronounced and practised for the benefit of agriculturists Chingleput district, despite its notoriety for chronic arrears in land revenue, was the only district in the province which was badly subjected to coercive processes of distraint and sale of lands by the Government. For instance, in 1871-72, over 38 per cent of the *pattadars* were in default, and their property under distraint.⁵⁰ In 1871-72 and 1872-73 the total land revenue of the district stood at Rs. 22,17,474 and Rs. 23,76,276 respectively. By resorting to coercive methods, to collect the arrears, amounting to Rs. 4,10,777 and Rs. 3,34,936, the lands and moveable properties were sold and taxes to the

tune of Rs. 1,17,285 and Rs. 1,15,722 respectively were recovered in two years from the ryots.⁵¹ The high rate of assessment and the collection of land revenue at any cost had serious repercussions on the cultivators. The *zamindars*, *mirasdars*, rich peasants and absentee landlords might have withstood the brunt of such a burden by sheer merit of being the owners of extensive tracts of land. But people like *payakaris*, small landholders and agricultural labourers, who formed the mainstay of agricultural industry in the district, were subjected to sufferings for want of money and necessities.

Also, the periodical fixation of land assessment, mostly in the ascending order, had invariably increased the value of land as a commodity. This encouraged non-agriculturists, like middlemen, merchants and money-landers, to encroach on the land in large numbers. In fact, this class had played no less significant a role in pushing people of slender resources to the condition of abject poverty.

Buchanan, while travelling India from east to west in 1800, had attributed the poverty of the small peasants as one of the causes of their inability to cultivate lands profitably.⁵² Throughout the nineteenth century the economic condition of the peasantry remained more or less the same. During favourable seasons, the small landholders, either in a single crop or in a double crop, after paying land revenue, water rate, cesses, etc., had earned Rs. 4-10-9 per acre as remuneration for their family. Even this earning was not obtainable during unfavourable seasons because the crops either failed or the lands remained uncultivated for want of water.

The condition of the *payakaris* was worse. They paid *thunduvaram* or a share of the produce to the owner. This usually amounted to half of the total produce of the land. From what remained, they had to deduct the cultivation expenses. In addition, as in the case of small peasants, they could not resume agricultural work without paying a share amounting to 5 per cent or more of the gross produce to the watchmen of the village.⁵³ After all these deductions, the *payakaris* had very little left for their own use and utilization. So they were always in debt to the landlord, his agent or the village money-lender.⁵⁴ When the number of absentee landlords increased, the lands were left to be cultivated by these *payakaris*. They, either with a small amount of own capital or with borrowed money, and with no knowledge of improved methods of cultivation or any incentive to cultivate, were reduced to a hand-to-mouth existence.⁵⁵ Among the agriculturists who indulged in cultivation, the small peasants and *payakaris* had more dealings with the money-lenders. According to S. Srinivasaragavaiyengar, the condition of the farmers improved since about the seventh decade of the nineteenth century, partly due to the decrease in the rate of interest charged by money-lenders in the district from 12 per cent to 6 per cent.⁵⁶ His failure to analyse the actual condition of the rural population in the district seems to have led him

to estimate the rate of interest charged by money-lenders far below the normal.

Actually, the money-lending business of the district was undertaken by Marwaris and village money-lenders. The former could not penetrate the villages and confined their profession to places like Saidapet, Poonamallee and Pallavaram.⁵⁷ The village money-lenders, mostly professionals and rich peasants, had much sway over the rural economy during nineteenth century. The small peasants usually obtained money from money-lenders against land and the *payakaris* against surety or trust. If there was no large-scale benefit, the moneyed, like the rich peasants, would not have taken to the business of money-lending. It was reported in 1876 that 40 per cent of the land had been alienated (including mortgages) to non-agriculturists in Chingleput district.⁵⁸ In view of these facts, it is understood that the rate of interest charged by money-lenders would have been relatively high and the disadvantage due to it fell on the small peasants and *payakaris*.

In the case of the landless agriculturists like the *pannaiyals* and *padiyals*, even the vicinity of the town of Madras and the demand for labour there did not result in an increase in wages,⁵⁹ indicating the extent of excess supply of labour in the district. In the first half of the nineteenth century they were well-fed by their masters during cultivating seasons, but they were faced with insufficient food availability during off-season periods.⁶⁰

The *padiyals* were usually engaged by the masters or landlords at the commencement of the season for the whole year. It was customary to advance them a small sum of about Rs. 5 or 10 as a sort of retainer, which, however, was to be repaid, when the connection ceased.⁶¹ The payments could be fixed either in absolute terms or as a percentage of the crop. But proportionate wages were paid probably in the harvest season.⁶² The earnings of a *padiyal* during the period before 1850 had been around Rs. 20 per annum,⁶³ and during the second half of the nineteenth century it was about Rs. 60.⁶⁴ Given the existing price level of foodgrains in the nineteenth century, these wages seemed extremely inadequate, resulting in a situation where the *padiyals* were malnourished and underemployed throughout the year.

The labourers, who constituted nearly half the total population of the district, were partly absorbed by agriculture, and to an extent by the public works started by the Government of Madras and the salt works undertaken by *mirasdars* and other well-to-do sections.⁶⁵ The latter were both seasonal workers and free. Comparatively speaking, the wages of the labourers doing public works were a little higher than that of agricultural labourers.⁶⁶ Rates of wages for skilled and unskilled labour in Chingleput district are provided in Table 8.⁶⁷

If employment was available throughout the year, the labourers attending to public works would have been materially well off in the district. But the small quantum of resources allotted for the purpose by

the then Government of Madras, the labourers had to go idle for most of the days in a year. In the net, if the condition of the non-agricultural labourer was precarious, so was that of the agricultural labourer during the nineteenth century.⁶⁸

Table 8 Wage Rates in Chingleput Dist

Place	Skilled Worker	Unskilled worker
	Rs A P	Rs A P
Village	0-6-0	0-2-6
Town	0-8-0	0-3-4

Next to agriculture, cotton and silk-weaving constituted the most important occupations in the district. During the heydays of the weaving industry, to thrive in this venture a weaver needed substantial capital of his own. But the weavers of the district were people of little means. Even for their subsistence they had to rely on advances from agents or dealers. The sums advanced to the weavers were half and sometimes the whole of the price of the goods, when there was a heavy demand for them from a great distance. The advance was initially for three months, without interest, but if the period was more, an interest of 0.75 per cent a month was charged. During slack periods the dealers lent the weavers money at 2 per cent a month from the date of the loan. Once the weaver got into the clutches of a dealer, he became a slave and remained one till his death. He could not dispose of any cloth until he had finished and delivered the goods contracted for by the agent. Often the weaver could not work for anybody but the dealer to whom he was indebted, and that too at starvation wages. If anybody else wished to engage him, the dealer's debts had to be liquidated but the weaver's position would still be unchanged. He would only have changed masters.⁶⁹ Inevitably such slavery and submersion, coupled with the consequent poverty or lack of purchasing power, forced the weavers to share the evil consequences of famines and scarcities when they broke out in the district.

Unlike the case with residents on the mainland, the welfare of professional fishermen living with their families along the 15-mile sea coast was completely neglected by the Government. In fact, an extensive trade in fish was carried on by this district during the 1870s. The fish was brought into Madras from as great a distance as 20 miles and thence exported by rail to Bangalore and other places. The Government of Madras had derived a significant annual revenue from fresh water fisheries, but sea-fishing though an important industry had not received any incentive from the Government. So, deep-sea fishermen were entirely at the mercy of a few headmen or of Chetties, who made advances to them at exorbitant rates of interest and thus got them hopelessly into their debt, or who supplied boats and nets

receiving one-third of the take in return. In some cases the fishermen were even mere labourers for daily hire.⁷⁰

POLITICAL FACTORS

Excepting whatsoever little amount the British spent on education and public health, in all spheres and in all respects 'maximisation of profit' seemed to have been their guiding principle in India. To facilitate it they had found ways and means to consolidate power and establish political stability in the country. In their dealings with the land system, public finance and public works, import and export and relief measures, their policy of draining India was evident. The people of Chingleput district were no exception to this onslaught.

Public Finance and Public Works

One area where this pursuit of profit was clearly in evidence is their policy of public finance and their lack of efforts to provide Chingleput district with minimum public works.⁷¹

Table 9 Revenue and Expenditure

Year	Total Revenue	Expenditure
1832-33	13,68,484-2-0	2,38,764-9-4
1850-51	13,38,704-4-1	1,74,384-8-2
1870-71	13,34,738-11-2	4,46,212-12-0

Out of this expenditure, agriculture and public works, the backbone and the veins of the district respectively, had not received a much needed share. From the year 1871 to 1876, the Imperial Government had sanctioned an average of Rs. 2,07,777 per year for agriculture, and for public works the provincial Government had spent an average of Rs. 28,118 per year.⁷² Absentee landlordism had turned agriculture into a disincentive-ridden occupation of the people. Small peasants and tenants, on whose shoulders the responsibility of carrying out agricultural activities fell, could not improve agriculture for want of enough capital. Neither the government nor the landlords paid any attention to redeem agriculture from its backward condition.

The Government realising the importance of irrigation which constitutes the principal item in any programme of agricultural development, attempted some works but not to the full requirement of the district. It is estimated that the six largest irrigational works of the district were able to supply water to 55,400 acres. The minor irrigation works had the capacity of watering 3,35,400 acres in an ordinary year, and during drought seasons they could water 41,000 acres only. The area protected by wells was also small.⁷³ If the Government had undertaken more works by allotting more money towards providing Chingleput district with sufficient irrigation

facilities, the district would have been well placed. But the Government behaved more like a businessman than a developmental agency.

While undertaking the Palar Anicut System in 1890-91, the Government had spent Rs 1,00,718 and derived revenue to the tune of Rs 1,32,560, which is 1.65 times the total capital outlay.⁷⁴ In view of such limited irrigation works attempted by the British, it is evident that they were content so long as their selective but remunerative irrigation projects proved successful.

In the case of transport and communications also, the Government seemed to have spent little. It has been estimated that up to the year 1901-1902, metalled and unmetalled roads measured 701 miles in the district.⁷⁵ Though the introduction of railways by the Government of Madras marked a turning point in the history of the communication and transport system in Chingleput district, by the end of the century, only important trade centres like Madurantakam, Conjeevaram, Chingleput, Arkonam, Saidapet and Ponneri were linked by railway.⁷⁶

Obviously, the remainder of the vast area of the district was not provided with that facility. That is why, when the passenger fares charged by the Railways turned moderate,⁷⁷ the people of the district, particularly the common man in remote areas, could not avail of the opportunity and was unable to participate in the economic activity of the state. Judging by the rates charged for luggage and parcels by the Railways, the big merchants, dealers or intermediaries alone may have utilized the services of the Railways to their end.⁷⁸

Import and Export

The main articles of import and export to and from the district of Chingleput during nineteenth century were machinery and mill cloth and foodgrains, indigo and hides respectively. In addition to this, before the decay of handloom industry, there was considerable export of handloom cloth of finer variety to countries like England, Singapore and Penang. But it is reported that the Madras port in 1895 received cotton piece goods from England to the value of Rs 194 lakhs.⁷⁹ Imports of this nature must have been quite common and frequent, otherwise the decimation of the handloom industry would not have been so complete during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Dyeing, the allied industry of weaving, met the same end and as a consequence, indigo became a commercial raw material to be exported to England. In 1867-68 from the city of Madras, indigo worth about Rs 43,15,004 was exported.⁸⁰

In the case of foodgrains there had been uninhibited continuous export to England, to feed the workers of the Industrial Revolution. The district of Chingleput had to contribute its share to such exports like its counterparts elsewhere in India.⁸¹

From Table 10 it is clear that even during the years 1866-67, which were ones of scarcity, the British exported rice to their home country, to

the detriment of the local population. It is also likely that it is due to the large quantity of rice export, and not due to the absolute failure of the crops in the district, that the prices of food-grains increased as much as they did during this period.

Table 10 Exports of Foodgrains from Chingleput (Value in Rs lakh)

Item	1864-65	1865-66	1866-67	1867-68	1868-69
Rice	60 613	65 885	84 513	70 445	69 109
Paddy				6 481	7 764

Relief Policy

The strategy of the Government should have been one of keeping a reserve of food-grains and releasing stocks to the market whenever traders indulged in hoarding or prices showed a tendency to rise beyond the levels reached in neighbouring markets. This policy of keeping reserves of food for such emergencies, however, met with disapproval from the Government of India on the ground that it constituted an interference with private trade.⁸² In fact, their adherence to private trade or free trade was seen in practice during all famines and scarcities in the district. They even went to the extent of encouraging the traders by giving liberal concessions.⁸³ This free trade policy, inapplicable to Indian conditions, where poverty and profiteering existed side by side, was unwisely applied to India, with disastrous results.

Even when organized efforts were taken by the Government to alleviate the difficulties of the people when affected by famines, they seemed comparatively poor and disproportional to the area affected. When a Government could collect taxes from the people, take action on defaulters, export foodgrains even during scarcity years and make arrangements for the easy movement of troops in bullock carts⁸⁴ even to the remote areas of the district with insufficient road facilities, it is surprising that it could not afford to allot more money for relief works. The motive behind this injustice was to keep Government finances on a sound footing, even at the cost of the welfare of the people, so as to rule India with a powerful hand.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF FAMINES

When the district of Chingleput was visited by seven years of famine and three years of scarcities during the nineteenth century, almost all people of all classes were subject to untold miseries. Some died and many suffered from disease and malnutrition. In addition to the people, numerous cattle died for want of fodder.

Though details regarding the 1807 famine are not available in full, from the remissions allowed by the Government to the agriculturists during the period, amounting to Rs. 4,81,372-8-0 out of a total revenue of Rs. 7,10,870, the impact on the people could be imagined.⁸⁵

The famine that occurred in 1824 was more severe than the first famine. The Collector of Chingleput reported on 28 January 1825 that the whole of the crop had been nearly destroyed and out of 72,204 acres (54,700 cawnies) cultivated in the district up to the end of November 1824, 48,840 acres (37,000 cawnies) had failed to produce any crop. The Collector anticipated that there would be deficiency in supply for the consumption of the population to the extent of 5,685 garces to be supplied from external sources. Mortality among the cattle greatly increased the distress of the people, as it deprived them of the means of cultivation.⁸⁶ During this famine, people died on public roads for want of food.⁸⁷ About 57,000 people of the district were in need of employment, for which the Government of Madras decided to take immediate action. Relief wages were paid mostly in money only.⁸⁸ Thus policy of the Government, instead of relieving the distress of the people, aggravated it as their immediate need was grain, which was dear at that time, and not money as such. In fact, during subsequent famines also, the Government pursued the same policy. The unchanged population in 1830 and 1839 (at 3,31,821) would prove that the normal increase of population was checked due to mortality resulting from the 1833 famine.⁸⁹ The distress from which the people suffered was long and severe due to the 1876-78 famine.⁹⁰ In 1876 alone, 9,35,184 people of the district were affected by this famine.⁹¹ During that period, cholera, *agni*, small pox, ophthalmia and deafness were very common in the district. In Conjeevaram, in 1875-76, out of 1577 persons affected by cholera, 1067 were reported dead.⁹² Succour from Madras, in the form of food and wages, made people flock to the city in large numbers. Relief camps organized by the Government as well as by private charities at Cortelliar, Pallavaram, Poonamallee and Chingleput could accommodate only 2,295 people from December 1876 to May 1877. Out of this 178 died in the camps.⁹³ The average number of people benefited by relief during the 22 months from December 1876 to September 1878 was 39,867 or 4.25 per cent of the population in 1871, of whom 11,965 were employed on works and 27,902 provided gratuitous relief. R.W. Barlow, the Collector of Chingleput, had reported in 1877 that men employed in relief works in Trivellore and Saidapet were physically too weak to do the work.⁹⁴ Efforts were also made to provide at least a minimum amount of fodder to the cattle in the district in vain.⁹⁵ Despite money granted to agriculturists and non-agriculturists like weavers to the tune of Rs. 1,25,000 and Rs. 75,000 respectively during this famine,⁹⁶ only 28,150 acres of dry and wet lands were cultivated between 1876 and June 1878.⁹⁷ This is lower than the area cultivated in 1870-71 by 4,06,850 acres.⁹⁸

Similarly during the 1876 famine, it had been reported that 11,32,644 were affected in the district.⁹⁹ Among them, in the year 1891, 4,793 persons had died of cholera.¹⁰⁰ Owing to serious failure of the north-east monsoon, pasture and fodder were generally scanty. As a result, the general health of the cattle deteriorated beyond cure. The highest

cattle mortality occurred in Madurantakam, Chingleput and Saidapet. The total deaths for the whole year (1891) aggregated 47,590 against 23,314 in 1890.¹⁰¹ As in other famines the Government was obliged to provide relief to the distressed people in the district. During the 12 months from February 1891 to January 1892, 6,003 people were provided relief, of whom 5,360 were employed on works and 643 provided gratuitous relief. But in parts most seriously affected, viz the Ponneri taluk, the average number provided relief was 1.08 per cent of the population in 1891.¹⁰²

Table 11 Price of Foodgrains in Rupees Per Grace

	Year	Paddy Average of I & II sort	Cholam	Cambu	Ragi
Non-Famine	1822-23	102	145	141	165
Famine	1823-24	175	271	254	273
	1824-25	231	368	325	355
Non-Famine	1831-32	76	86	87	103
Famine	1832-33	126	180	167	185
	1833-34	155	256	205	235
Non-Famine	1874-75	137	229	167	188
Famine	1877-78	333	-	415	442
	1878-79	262	-	270	300
Non-Famine	1889-90	166	-	240	168
Famine	1890-91	197	-	239	202
	1891-92	234	-	345	308

Table 12

Period	Land Revenue	
	Net current remissions	Total land revenue demand
1866-67 to		
1870-71	83.0	84.6
1876-77	30.1	32.2
1877-78	105.4	104.5
1878-79	101.4	101.9
1886-87 to		
1890-91	116.6	116.5
1891-92	78.8	78.7
1900-01	108.5	111.3

Apart from the data available for the number of people who died or suffered due to disease during famines in the district, the real distress of the people could also be seen from the prevalent price level of staple foodgrains during such calamities in the nineteenth century. Table 11 illustrates how dear foodgrains were during these famines compared to prices prevalent during favourable seasons.¹⁰³

Out of necessity, the Government had allowed some remissions to the agriculturists in times of famines and scarcities. If averages for the quinquennial period immediately before the famine of 1876-78 are taken as a standard (base=100), the variations in the land revenue of the district during unfavourable seasons would disclose that remissions which were comparatively small had very little contribution towards providing relief to the people from total distress.¹⁰⁴

The frequent outbreak of these famines had some painful merits. The Government, while engaging the famine-stricken people temporarily on some public works, realized the importance of roads and canals in accelerating social mobility and in providing employment to the rural unemployed. Also, the Government had realized the futility of attempting remedial measures on a large scale during famines and found an invaluable alternative of long-term benefit in protective measures. Though protective measures may include land reforms, irrigation facilities to agriculture, improved methods of cultivation and supply of large-scale rural credit, the Government had not ventured to attempt these to the full extent as they were detrimental to their policy of colonialism. At least a legislation regarding the distribution of waste lands which remained uncultivated under *mirasdars* for ages together could have been introduced and the lands distributed among the landless. But that was not undertaken. An attempt to start an agricultural college by the Madras Government at Saidapet, however, met with success. It was intended to educate the cultivators in improving the methods of cultivation in the district. But the rigid and uncompromising attitude and illiteracy of the people and rack rents in agriculture, all proved effective and rendered the agricultural college ineffective.¹⁰⁵

Simultaneously, the Government granted *takkavi* loans to peasants for purchasing ploughs, seeds and for digging wells. In fact, these loans had not represented more than 4 per cent of the total revenue of the district.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the cultivators who were able to get loans from the Government after much delay and late response, were also tempted to spend the amount on uneconomic purposes such as marriages, etc.¹⁰⁷ Lastly, to find out reasons for the frequent occurrence of such calamities in India in general, the Government had appointed Famine Commissions in 1878-1880 and 1898 and received recommendations which emphasised the importance of protective measures to combat famines.

CONCLUSIONS

The above study brings out several conclusions. Natural or geographical factors were just one among the several factors that led to the outbreak of famines in Chingleput district during the nineteenth century. The frequent failure of rains, the poor-quality soils and the absence of adequate hills, forests, natural rivers or streams seemed a stumbling block to the development of agriculture in the district. However, the

adverse effects of this natural disadvantage of the district could have been minimised if the government had, with the cooperation of the people, developed irrigation facilities and encouraged large-scale tree plantation. But in the absence of such artificial remedies, neither the productivity of the land nor total lands brought under cultivation showed any significant increase over the years.

The strained relations that existed in the agrarian sector during the nineteenth century, was the main reason for the socio-economic backwardness of the country. The new land system (ryotwari) introduced by the British was not at all radical, because it only succeeded in replacing the *zamindari* or *mirasdari* system with a 'new land-lordism'. This was followed by monetisation of the rural economy. Thereafter, land became a commodity and its price was fixed in terms of money. Anybody could buy and sell it. As a result, middlemen like money-lenders, dealers and agents and other moneyed people, bought lands and became absentee landlords. The emergence of this new class had conveniently left the practice of agriculture to people with little or no capital, hence backward agriculture.

On the other hand 'the increased land taxes' imposed by the British not only deprived the small land holder and the tenants of their meagre share of the produce of the land, but also resulted in a lowering of the wages of the landless labourers. However, the rack-rented landocracy was not affected by this increased land tax. In addition to that, the British, by exporting foodgrains to their country even during years of scarcity had created an artificial shortage in foodgrains in the district. This rendered foodgrains dear and beyond the reach of the common man's purchasing power.

The real character of agricultural backwardness was noticed in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the handloom industry was almost annihilated by the British (who encouraged imports of cheap mill goods from England). The weavers thus thrown out of employment had to rely more on agriculture. The perpetuation of industrial backwardness was also responsible for unemployment, since the displaced could not find any other alternative to agriculture and weekly depended on it for their paltry subsistence.

Public works like irrigation, communication and transport facilities undertaken by the Government were limited because the money allotted for those vital purposes was limited. Those limited public works could not penetrate the remote areas and failed to help the vast majority of people.

The distress of the people was aggravated when the monsoons failed. The outbreak of five famines and several scarcities put the inhabitants of the district to untold misery. With the exception of the amounts that were spent by the British on education and public health, in all spheres and ventures, 'profit maximisation' was the guiding principle. But, when the majority people of the district were stricken by poverty and malnutrition, the occasional failure of rains accentuated their

distress—hence famines and scarcities. This challenge could have been effectively met by the Government if it was really concerned. But it never seemed to have been so.

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24 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

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Scale of fares for passengers (Railways)

Class		Per pass mule			Minimum charges		
		Rs.	A	P	Rs	A	P
I	Class	0	1	0	0	3	6
II	Class	0	0	4	0	1	0
III	Class	0	0	2	0	0	6

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 * 1 star pagoda = Rs 2-8-0
 ** 1 Cawnie = 1 32 acres
 @ 1 Garce = 2468 6 lbs (approx)
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BALGOVIND BABOO*

*The Economic History of Sambalpur District,
1849-1947: An Introduction*

Our major concern in this paper is to understand the various facets of the village economy—land, labour and credit markets—of Sambalpur district of Orissa State in a spatio-temporal context. The attempt is to examine the nature of the tribal, peasant and urban sectors of the economy in a diachronic perspective, taking into consideration the impact of colonial intervention. We emphasize that: (i) to understand the economy of a village, the regional economy has to be understood; (ii) while taking into consideration specific historical incidents which impact on the regional economy, we have also to recognize the internal dynamics of the institutions of that region which develop in-built mechanisms to face the historical onslaught, (iii) the rural-urban dichotomy is untenable in India where 8 per cent of the population is tribal, having a distinct type of economy and social organization.

Sambalpur was brought under the direct control of the British in 1849. The unification of the district was completed only on 26 October 1949. Before that its constituent parts were part of the South-West Frontier (1849–1860), Orissa Division of Bengal (1860–1862), the Central Provinces (1862–1905), the Division of the Province of Bengal (1905–1912), and again the Central Provinces (1912–1936). It became a district of Orissa only in 1936 when Orissa became a separate state.

The district was first brought under Settlement (of the South-West Province) in 1850 for a period of 3 years, which was renewed until the end of 1858. The next Settlement started in 1862–63, after the transfer of the district to the Central Provinces. Such short term Settlements proved harmful to the ryots, who could not invest in land with the aim of increasing productivity, because in the context of increasing revenue, the ryots (tenants) faced the threat of eviction from 'their' land by the *Gountias* and *Zamindars* (landholders).¹ A.M. Russel notes that the sources of income of the *Zamindars* included land revenue, forest dues, bazar dues, *nazarana* and *pandhri* tax. 'A little more than two-thirds of the land revenue and half of the other sources of income were left to the *Zamindar*' (Russel, 1876–77: 61). The *bhoora bhogi Gountias* who held land free of rent, equivalent to an area yielding a maximum of 25

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per cent of the revenue of the village, besides the *bethi begar*,² were equally powerful. That is, the *Gountias* and *Zamindars* emerged as a powerful class of landlords in the aftermath of British rule.

After the expiry of the first major Settlement conducted during 1872-76, the second Settlement was undertaken by W. Nethersole (1885-89). He notes that cotton was grown in sufficient quantity to supply the scanty clothes people used. The major crops were rice, pulses, *til*, cotton and sugarcane. Though the more productive transplantation method covered only 3 to 4 per cent of the total area cultivated, there were about 3.3 and 4.3 tanks per village (for occasional irrigation) in Bargarh and Sambalpur tehsils (respectively), which led to increase in production (Nethersole, 1885-89: 5-7). Since food supply was plentiful and easily procured, even the condition of the attached labourers and the casual labourers was fairly satisfactory.³ Although the district received only scanty rainfall in 1834, 1845, 1865-66, 1877-78 and 1886, which affected the price of rice, especially in the Padampur tract (O'Malley, 1909: 20-22), Nethersole's observation about the 'general prosperity' of the district might be upheld for at least two reasons. (a) the rate of growth of the population during 1872-1891, inflated by the incompleteness of the then census (O'Malley, 1909: 53), was not that high, limiting the pressure on land, and (b) the Mahanadi which traverses 122 kms in the district was the only major route of transportation and export (the Sonpur-Ganjam road was also of some significance), resulting in a restriction on the export of rice from the district which helped hold the price level. Moreover, since the labourers were being paid mainly in kind (paddy and rice), even the small fluctuations in price did not affect them adversely. But they were certainly affected during natural calamities like droughts, floods and invasion by pests. The 'general prosperity' of the district, however, had a major setback after 1890 when the Bengal-Nagpur railway line, passing through Jharsuguda, was completed. The completion in 1894 of the Jharsuguda-Sambalpur Branch Railway affected the extent of trade and doubled the price of rice, led to an increase in the value of land and a 30 per cent enhancement of revenue in the next Settlement.⁴ The immediate result of the expansion of the trade routes in the district, which 'had no road worthy of the name', in 1874, was an extension of rice-cropping and an invasion by Hindu cultivators into the hill and forest villages (Dewar, 1920: 4). The Cutchi traders also encroached on the tribal villages for the minor produce of the *Zamindari* forests, e.g., *mahua*, lac, *myrobalans*, etc. The local Brahmuns, Cutchi Muhammadans and Marwaris bought grains and sold imported cotton thread, salt, tobacco, kerosene oil and cloth, but their methods and scale of trading were different. The increase in trade is significant, as reflected in an increase in the number of Marwari traders in Sambalpur, who engaged in trade throughout the year, from 1223 in 1891 to 2867 in 1901 (O'Malley, 1909: 136).⁵ The increase in the price of land, rice and the export from the district and the expansion in transport meant prosperity for a particular class of the agrarian population (Hamid, 1921: 25 and 15), who furthered their material gains during the scarcity of 1897 and the famine of 1900. This resulted in the outmigration of the aboriginals, labourers and poor *rai-yats*.

observed by F Dewar in 1906 and Hamid in 1925.⁶ Hamid further observes that during the 20 years from 1902-06 to 1922-26, there was an increase of 42 per cent in irrigated area (op cit: 23). But almost all the tanks and most of the wells belonged to the more prosperous sections of the agrarian population. This was so because the digging of these water reservoirs was labour intensive and the operation had to be completed in a limited time period prior to the ensuing rains. However, in spite of the substantial increase in the area under irrigation, overall productivity declined significantly.⁷ This was mainly due to the setback in agriculture during the periods after the famine of 1900 and the war of 1914-16. The famine took a toll of 74,170 people between 1 October 1899 to 30 September 1900 (a death toll of 93 per million on the last census population of 7,96,000). The price of rice rose sharply (with the value of 17 to 20 seers in normal years equalling that of 5 to 6 seers in 1900), due to hoarding by landlords, rich ryots, etc., and the export of rice in 1899, during the first half of the crisis. This must have adversely affected the aborigines, labourers and smaller cultivators. Even though mortality by caste/category was not recorded, one can surmise that the 'conservative' aborigines, who rarely attended the famine kitchens, and the poor peasants and agricultural labourers, who were afraid of future repayment in case they attended the kitchens, must have borne the brunt of the tragedy.⁸ Forced to work for miserably low wages and to mortgage/sell their belongings in a last bid for survival, their pauperisation was inevitable.⁹

The relative scarcity of labourers (after the famine), the low productive capacity of the semi-starved labourers and the under-development of the forces of production on the one hand, and the casual interest of the landlords (who had most of the irrigated land) in agriculture, on the other, resulted in lower productivity and a consequent small increase in the area under different crops.

The First World War also led to increasing uncertainty and a sharp increase in prices, but by then the emphasis on agriculture seems to have declined. The increase in the area under paddy (transplant) and sugarcane shows that the *Gountias* and to some extent the large cultivators, who had the maximum of irrigable land, prospered much more than others. This would be more so because the investment in transplant paddy and sugarcane, especially the latter where the maturity period is fairly long, is more than in most other crops. The increase in the price of land during this period was not the result of increasing productivity but the increase in prices of agricultural commodities and 'improved' transport.¹⁰ The increasing alienation from land, as observed above, must have pushed the poor peasants and the aborigines to depend on forest resources and forced them to clear land under forest. Both Dewar and O'Malley note the massive deforestation which started after 1887. The desperation of the poor peasants and aborigines and their increasing dependence on the forests, on the one hand, and the appointment of 'respectable inhabitants of conveniently situated villages' as forest licence-vendors, on the other, led to an increase in earnings from this source, both for the colonial government and also the *Gountias*, etc., who were the 'respectable inhabitants.'¹¹

Further, the transfer of the exclusive right to supply country spirit to contractors (in 1907-08) meant more expenditure for the lower castes/aboriginals who were (and still are) customary drinkers (O'Malley, 1909 181-82) That is, the British policy on land, forest, transport, liquor, etc, on the one hand, and objective conditions of agriculture on the other, empowered/enriched a particular class of the agrarian population and pauperised further the poor peasants, artisans and the aboriginals¹² The repercussions of this trend are also reflected in the number of *Gountias*, from different categories, who held the villages in different Settlements The higher castes like Brahmin, Kulta, Rajput, etc gradually 'owned' more villages whereas the major tribes like Gond, Sawara, Binjhal, etc 'lost' more villages Although the comparison could not be done for *Zamindaris* for some practical reasons, Hamid observed, 'the number of aboriginal landlords in the *Zamindaris* is definitely on the decline' (op cit 14)

The data on the labour situation during this period show that there had been little increase in the amount of payment made to *qutis*, *kuthias* (attached labourers) and *bhutiars* (casual labourers) The attached labourers, who were invariably paid in kind, were employed on an annual basis and hence they were not very adversely affected during failure of crops though the *qutis* got less wages in the form of a share of the harvest and annual emoluments But the casual labourers were hard hit, more so because they were also paid in cash, which meant an erosion of real incomes during periods of scarcity The female labourers also derived occasional and meagre earnings from transplanting, weeding, harvesting and rice-husking. Although Nethersole (185-89) and Dewar (1902-06) noted the 'satisfactory' conditions of the labourers in normal years they were of the opinion that the labourers were not in a position to save at all However, Hamid (1922-26) observed their deteriorating condition There is a paucity of data as to what happened to labourers during the Great Depression of 1930s and the Second World War

Nethersole opined that probably more than half of the cultivators were, more or less, in debt It has been noted that during the pre-independence period the village money-lenders, *Gountias*, *Zamindars*, *Kabuliwallahs* and *Kistiwallas* used to meet the loan requirements of people. The terms and conditions at which they provided loans were different and the interest rate varied from 18 per cent to 75 per cent, for cash and 50 per cent for paddy (Senapati and Mahanti, op cit 231-34 and 330) Senapati and Mahanti, like many government officials, seem to have under-reported the interest rate Dewar (1902-06) observed the 'general prosperity' of the district but at the same time noted the differentiation in the agrarian population which became sharper in course of time The upper class of the *raiya*s also loaned out substantially during this period (Dewar quoted in *ibid* 330) Since rainfall was scanty almost every seven years between 1884 to 1899 and the price of paddy was correlated with it, the rich *raiya*s prospered further in the later period They advanced loans during lean seasons and periods of scarcity, and exploited the benefits of surplus labour At the same time they accumulated land, livestock, utensils, jewellery, etc, which the borrowers forfeited The cooperative movement started

way back in 1904. The Central Cooperative Bank started functioning in Sambalpur and Bargarh on 26 December 1918 and 14 January 1924 respectively. Though the number of affiliated societies (primarily agricultural) increased steadily (Hamid, op.cit: 18), they must not have made much headway given the undeveloped production relations of 1920s

During the period 1938–46 there were substantial improvements in irrigation, more land was brought under cultivation, the acreage under all the major crops increased and prices of agricultural commodities increased consistently.

However, these improvements and the consequent improvement in the profitability of agriculture was not accompanied by any increase in wages, implying that they would not have improved the conditions of the labourers except to the extent they might have led to more secure employment. Furthermore, the 'general prosperity' observed by Nethersole (1885–89) led to considerable increase in the amount of rent imposed on different types of land in the next two Settlements. Such enhancements in rent would have mopped up much of the benefits accruing to the poor cultivators. Although data regarding the various strata of the agrarian population are not available, it is to be expected that the tendencies towards polarisation which were manifest up to the First World War must have continued subsequently.

In the sphere of industry also the district was very backward. The main industries during the time were those involving the weaving of cotton and tusser cloth and manufacture of bell-metal utensils. The industries of the district were small establishments of village artisans based on manual labour and met the basic needs of the villagers.¹³ Before independence there were only two municipalities in the district, namely Sambalpur and Deogarh, which started functioning in 1889 and 1912 respectively. This shows that the degree of urbanisation was low.

Till Independence, Sambalpur district was really backward in terms of industrialisation, urbanisation, education, banking, agricultural practices, etc. Although rich cultivators and *Gountias* took interest in the development of irrigation, the agricultural practices itself were backward and agriculture depended mainly on the monsoon. There was no use of chemical fertilizers. People used animal dung, the sediment in the tanks and ponds, *khariyani* (i.e., the distilled refuse of the cow sheds, etc., in rainy season), etc., as manure. The low yielding broadcast method (vis-a-vis the high yielding transplant method) and the time-consuming lift irrigation system were in vogue. The agricultural implements were also of low quality and agricultural operations were time consuming and exhausting for both human beings and animals.

Some authors have argued that the collection of rent and cess in cash, enhanced cultivation of commercial crops like cotton, sugarcane, jute, etc. (Bailey, 1934–1957; Whitcombe, 1971). However, our data pertaining to this period do not fully support this argument.¹⁴ The primary producers produced mainly for immediate consumption and grew mostly food-crops. They grew other crops if the soil was suitable and other infrastructural facilities, including irrigation, were available. There were rare instances of shifting cultivation, at least in the Sambalpur and Bargarh tehsils, but the gradual concentration of

holdings in the hands of a few people and the uneconomic nature of agriculture, compelled the downtrodden to earn their livelihood from the forests¹⁵

So far we have tried to understand the economy of the district giving special emphasis on the various sections of the agrarian population. At this juncture i.e., at the end of the colonial period the agrarian population can be divided into: (1) The landlords that include the *Gountias*, *Zamindars*, *Manufidars*, etc. who are drawn mainly from the Brahmin, Kulta, Mohanti, Rajput, Aghria, and Gaur (Gaud) castes and Binjhal, Sahara and Kandha tribes who kept the best part of their land under direct or indirect supervision, giving away the rest of their land on share-cropping and lease; (2) the comparatively poor relatives and friends of the landlords who came from the dominant castes of that region (who received land free of rent, i.e., the *bebandobast* plots) and the Jhanars (invariably tribals); (3) owner cultivators mainly from Kulta, Dumal, Teli, Sundhi, and Aghria castes (4) lessee and share croppers with or without their own small land holding; (5) artisans and menials with or without land, and (6) the agricultural labourers drawn from low castes, untouchables and aboriginals/tribals who did not have land. Each of the above stratum is not purely homogenous with regard to caste/tribe and landholding, i.e., the categories are not mutually exclusive. But yet such a categorisation might be helpful for understanding agrarian economy and more so of the class formations during Planning period. The above agrarian categories show their rank in caste (according to ritual status) landholding and type of labour performed by them¹⁶ In such a system land was concentrated in the hands of a few who did not participate in the process of production. The actual tillers did not have land at all or had little land to work on.¹⁷ They were attached to the owner of the land by illegal tenancy, exploitative share-cropping, underpaid labour and usurious credit. The landlords and some rich *raiyats* acted both as monopolists and monoponists because market was underdeveloped and people were compelled to sell their produces to the same person who had advanced money/paddy during the slack period. Such a system of production relation is usually termed as semi-foundalism, the essential features of which are: (1) an extensive non-legalised share-cropping system, (2) perpetual indebtedness of the small tenants, (3) the characteristic feature of the 'ruling class' in rural areas—they operate both as land owners and moneylenders to small tenants, (4) the specific historical character of rural 'markets' where small tenants have incomplete access to the market and are forcibly involved in involuntary exchange through the peculiar organization of 'markets' (Bhaduri, 1973: 11)

CONCLUSION

To understand a social formation the dominant mode of production has to be understood properly (This is not to deny that there may be several modes of production co-existing in a nation-state) Macro-theorisation on the mode of production in India—in agrarian and industrial sector or in general—must take into account the specificities in ecology, history and culture. As far as economic organization is concerned, Western sociologists and anthropologists mostly talk of

dichotomous social types—rural and urban. Given the lower level of industrial-urbanisation and sizable tribal population (28.13% in 1971) in Sambalpur district we have thought in terms of three dominant spatio-cultural types—tribal, peasant and urban—supposed to have three overlapping types of economic organizations. A general discussion of the agrarian economy during colonial period made us believe that the backward economy of Sambalpur had predominantly semi-feudal characteristics. The absence of perennial irrigation system, improved inputs and industrial development on the one hand, and the colonial policies—especially regarding land, revenue and forest—on the other, led to a highly stratified agrarian population. It also undermined the informal cooperative activities in socio-economic arena and people could not stretch their ideas and institutions to cope with the exploitative machineries. The landlords and other intermediaries took advantage of the situation and emerged as a powerful class, who had access to and control over land, labour, credit and market. On the other hand the lower rungs of the peasantry, the landless labourers and the aboriginals led a miserable life.

(I am grateful to T.K. Oommen and S. Bhattacharya for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. However, I alone am responsible for the views expressed in this paper. Readers who are particular about data may kindly see Chapter II of my Ph.D. thesis, *'Economic Exchanges in Rural Orissa: A Comparative Study of Six Villages'*, School of Social Sciences, JNU, Delhi, 1982).

NOTES

- 1 For diversity of views on the status of *Gountias* and *ryots* see Russel (1876-77: 75-86), Senapati and Mahanti (1971: 345-46). Note 'For the purpose of land revenue administration the district of Sambalpur can be conveniently divided into two tracts, namely, the *Khalsa* and the *Zamindaris*. The term *Khalsa* is used to indicate land held directly from Government. There were 5 classes of proprietors in the *Khalsa*. The *Gountias*—were the village headmen in the *Khalsa* area—were responsible for the payment of a lump sum assessment on the village for the period of years according to a lease which was periodically revised and renewed. The headmen were occasionally ejected for default in the payment of revenue.'
- 2 *Bethi begari* consisted of supplying one day's labour with plough and cattle during rainy season and one day's labour during harvest season. Besides they were asked 'volunteer' during these operations, with nominal payment or over a meal. The *rayats* were also asked to bring 'gifts' and supply labour during the visit of police, revenue officials and dignitaries (*rasad*). But these supplied depended on the status of the *rayats*. For details, see O'Malley (1909: 179 and 89). For rents on different type of land from 1876-1902, see Dewar (1906-80).
- 3 Nethersole (ibid: 19), however, notes that 'the aboriginal tribes which inhabit the wilder parts of the *Zamindaris* are miserably poor, and to all appearances are hard put to secure a livelihood. But with them poverty is a racial characteristic, and as they will not work in times of hardship or save in times of plenty their living cannot be otherwise than from hand to mouth. We are not endorsing Nethersole's views on the satisfactory condition of labourers. The colonial administrators' explanation of tribal poverty, in terms of psychological attributes, is also untenable.
- 4 The major exports during the period were rice, pulses (chiefly moong), oil seeds (oil) and hides. The major imports were cotton thread, salt, sugar and tobacco. For details about trade and prices see Dewar (1920: 43-47). For a relationship between development in transport and price of commodities see Robert (1983: 63).
- 5 F. Dewar who carried on the Settlement during 1902-06 notes that the tribals had a stronghold in the *Zamindari* areas where they held 13 out of the 17 *Zamindari* estates. But the managers of the individual villages were mostly Hindus (ibid: 7 and 14).
- 6 Dewar writes 'the aboriginal bought, mortgaged and sometimes cheated out of the land cleared by his forefathers, is exported to Assam or moves to the still uncleared forests' (op cit: 7). 'I think it is a fair estimate that between 1891 and 1901 about

- 30,000 Sambalpur born persons emigrated to Assam' (ibid 12) Mr Hamid writes 'from the Sadar tehsil many labourers and poor *rayats* generally go away every year in February to Chakradharpur and other places on the railway where they can find work, returning to their homes just before the rain sets in' (op cit 15)
- 7 Whereas Dewar estimates the productivity (for paddy) at 35, 25 and 22 maunds per acre for *bahal*, *berna* and *mal* land respectively, Hamid estimates the productivity at 24, 20 and 17 maunds respectively for the above of land. See Dewar (op cit 63) and Hamid (op cit 21). Cultivable land is generally classified as *aat* (high lying land), *mal* (upland terrace), *berna* (*del*) and *bahal* (low lying land occurring towards the bottom of a depression). *Aat* land is suitable for growing groundnut and pulses whereas the remaining three categories are suitable for growing paddy.
 - 8 For similar observation elsewhere, see Acharya (1976 85-86). Hunter (1907) estimated that about 31 per cent of the population of Orissa belonging mostly to lower castes—who worked as day labourers, menials, small handicraft men and a large section of the *rayats* perished in the famine of 1866.
 - 9 Senapati and Mahanti (1971 188) note 'It was difficult, in the face of long previous prosperity, to believe that distress in Sambalpur would be real. It was real and the explanation is that the appearance of prosperity is somewhat deceptive, for it is confined to certain rich parts of the district and to the higher classes. The standard of comfort moreover is low, a large proportion of the population consisting of aboriginals do not save. Distress was consequently acute, and one striking illustration of its reality is that the merchants bought up at low prices thousands of brass lotas and ginas, two cart-loads of which were at one time being ferried over the Mahanadi to Sambalpur daily. Another illustration will be found in the figures of export and import, for equal quantities later in the year'.
 - 10 According to Hamid (op cit 19) the average price of land which was Rs 16-11-0 per acre during Dewar Settlement increased to Rs 58, 31, 39 and 17 respectively in the *Khalsa* and *Zamindari* of Sambalpur and Bargarh tehsil. The rise in the value of land also led to a rise in the number of civil suits pertaining mostly to mortgage and transfer of immovable property. O'Malley observed that 'suits for ejectment or for recovery of possession are common, and are mostly brought by *Gountas* to recover from sub-tenants, possession of their home—farm lands' (op cit 185-86).
 - 11 O'Malley (1909 97) writes 'Until 1887, when a Forest Officer was appointed, the reserves were managed by the revenue officials with the help of a very small staff of subordinates, and inhabitants of the district were allowed to cut and collect produce in them, and to graze their cattle as much as they like, on payment of a fee of four annas a year on each plough or rood. The latter is known as commutation fee, because the villagers are allowed to commute for their annual supply of fuel and timber for home consumption on payment of a fixed sum. The appointment of a Forest Officer led to the formation of the Sambalpur Forest Division and the introduction of the forest stamp system, which is a feature of the forest management in the Central Province. Under this system respectable inhabitants of conveniently situated villages are appointed forest licence-vendors. They supply applicants with licenses to cut and remove such produce as the latter may require on payment at rates specified in an authorised schedule of prices, and they place on each licence forest stamps, which they can purchase from the treasury, of the value of the produce covered by the licence. Their remuneration consists of a commission (generally one anna in the rupee) on the amount spent by them on purchasing stamps from the treasury'.
 - 12 Though we do not have substantial data on the influx of manufactured goods during this period (as a result of colonial policy), literature in Oriya language tells us about the downfall of cottage industry and the various problems of the artisans in production and marketing of their commodities. For instance See Mehar (1972 306-09), Census of India (1961 Part 7-A), etc.
 - 13 The Hingir Rampur Coal Company (1909), the Ib-River Colliery (1917), the Graphite Mining in Sargipali (1945), the Indian Aluminium Company at Hirakud (1938) and the Orient Paper Mills at Brajarajnagar (1939) were only a few industries and mines, worth the name, that operated during the pre-independence period. But their contribution to the economy of the district, in terms of production and labour absorption was not very significant. See Senapati and Mahanti (1971 209-15).
 - 14 The average annual percentage variation for area under different crops during the years 1913-14 to 1918-19 and 1937-38 to 1945-46 are as follows: total food grains 0.46 and 1.86, oil seeds -6.43, fruits and vegetables -2.41 and 2.76.
 - 15 This general description is based on the different reports referred to so far in this paper.
 - 16 This categorisation of agrarian population tentatively shows that the numerical strength of the landlords and rich cultivators, who come invariably from the higher castes, is negligible compared to the bulk of landless labourers. If data on caste and ownership of land would have been available it would have shown an interesting relationship.

34 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

- 17 Dewar's (op cit 14) estimate in 1906 shows that out of 75% of the total population, 27% of the population were farm servants and field labourers and 71% as proprietors and tenants. Although he does not mention the percentage of tenants it is assumed that it must be very high since the landlords at that time leased out most of their land to keep the tenants attached for various forms of exploitation

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D SUBRAMANYAM REDDY*

The Ryotwari Land Revenue Settlements and Peasant Resistance in the 'Northern Division of Arcot' of the Madras Presidency during Early British Rule

Early in the nineteenth century, many significant changes took place in South India viz., the establishment of British authority over several tracts; the introduction of new land laws which brought about major structural changes in society, the fall-out of events in the southern *pollams*, ceded districts, northern *sirkars*, Chittoor *pollams*; and the changes effected with regard to the position of the *poligars* and *zamindars*. These factors began to transform the Northern Division of Arcot (present North Arcot of Tamilnadu and Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh) and the Chittoor *pollams* (in the present Chittoor district) of the Madras presidency also. As a part of these changes, settlements were made either with the landlords (*zamindari* settlements) or with the peasants (*ryotwari* settlements) in the *sirkar* lands and in those resumed in the *poligars'* (Chittoor) territories. The desire to extract as much surplus produce as the land could yield underlay the growing tendency to make settlements directly with the cultivators.¹ An assessment of the effect this had on the ryots is, hence, essential for an understanding of the rebellion of the Chittoor and North Arcot *ryots*.²

When Stratton was appointed as the first British Collector of the Northern Division of Arcot in 1801, after its acquisition from the Nawab of Arcot in that year, he was given power to make revenue settlements. While making his first settlement in fasli 1211 (1801-1802), he adopted the system of village rents in the *sirkar* lands and also in the resumed parts of *poligari* lands.³ This was in fact the re-establishment of the old *mirasi* system but with certain alterations.⁴

Stratton was succeeded by David Cockburn (1803-1805), who was transferred from the district of Salem to the 'Northern Division of Arcot and Baramahal and the Balaghat districts'. With the experience he had with Munro under Captain Read in Salem, he introduced the *ryotwari* system in place of Stratton's village renting system.

The settlement of land revenues under the *Ryotwari* system of Munro was, in general, with the actual cultivators of the soil, without joint

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responsibility and without intervention of a *zamindar*, a *poligar*, a village headman or any other intermediary. The *ryotwari* settlement depended on a regular survey ascertaining the real extent of land cultivated, its description, including the tenure by which it was held and kinds of produce it yielded, the quantity of yield, extent of uncultivated or waste land, and the share of the producer and the Government.⁵ The object of the *ryotwari* settlement was to fix a defined tax in money⁶ on each field, whether wet or dry, instead of on the crop,⁷ and the assessment on the lands was determined by the average payments, whether in money or in grain, in the last ten years.⁸

But in the case of the Northern Division of Arcot the *ryotwari* principles were modified by Cockburn, keeping in view, what he called, the 'local circumstances'.⁹ It is this aspect of local variation of the *ryotwari* system and its effects on the peasants which is the concern of this paper.

Under this system in *punjai* or dry grain lands, the average of the 'land rent' and the 'extra assessments' in money (collected by the Nawabs of Carnatic, *poligars* and other chieftains) were taken as the basis for Cockburn's settlement.¹⁰

In the *nunjai* or wet grain lands (or lands irrigated by tanks, water courses, etc.) the customary share of the Government was calculated on the basis of the *karnam's* accounts, the productive capacity of the soil and the actual produce of the year (not average of several years), together with a certain portion of the 'assumed *meras*'. This share of the Government was commuted for a money payment at a rate lower by six *mercals* in a *pagoda*. But the average selling price of the last ten years, which was the practice in the ceded districts of the Madras Presidency, was not followed in this region.¹¹

In the garden lands (or plantations and lands producing tobacco, beetle, turmeric, sugarcane, etc.), while formerly the assessment was made with reference to the produce, Cockburn fixed it on the basis of the quality of the soil¹² and hence the assessment was 'too high'.¹³ It was therefore felt necessary to reduce the rates on garden lands. This was done only during the tenure of Cockburn's successor, Grames (November 1804-1818).¹⁴

The *ryotwari* system introduced by Cockburn sought¹⁵ (1) to prevent fraud in receiving shares of the produce; (2) to discover productive land not registered by *karnams*, (3) to promote 'prosperity of revenue', (4) to protect the cultivators from 'undefined or immoderate exaction'; (5) to ascertain the 'truer' produce and profits enjoyed by renters, (6) to substitute money rents for payments in grain, (7) to fix the rent on equitable principles and in a permanent manner, (8) to limit the rent by *patta* or written engagements, (9) to 'emancipate the lower classes' of *ryots*; (10) to secure the rights 'to stimulate industry', (11) to 'reward the labour of the *ryot*' or to secure to the 'inferior *ryots*' the 'profits' (or 'benefit') or the 'fruits' of their 'labour'; and (12) to fetch a 'stable revenue to the Government or to secure the revenue of Government from defalcation.

The Board of Revenue also directed Cockburn to make a survey for the purpose of fixing a rent on the lands of 'those districts in which the rates of *warum* (share in the crop) have never been distinctly

ascertained'¹⁶ It also concurred with Cockburn, when he stated in a letter, that '... it is my intention to make a settlement with each *ryot* for the rent he shall pay for the land he may cultivate'¹⁷ The Board of Revenue therefore instructed him to survey the lands under his charge and to fix the rent.¹⁸ In the settlement of fasli 1213, therefore, 'the rent of every cultivated field' had been 'ascertained' and 'the amount of payment fixed by *patta* given to each individual paying revenue direct to Government'¹⁹

But this *ryotwari* settlement was of a cruder kind compared with the *ryotwari* introduced by Munro in the ceded districts, because initially Cockburn did not undertake the survey before fixing the rent. It was only in the second half of the year 1804 that he began a proper survey of the district. 'In order to secure cultivators from undefined or immoderate exaction, it is not necessary to measure the country'²⁰ he wrote to the Board

However, in June 1804 he declared, in order to rectify errors in the rent and to 'discover' encroachments made on the Government lands by 'irregular alienations and unauthorized privileges', a 'survey of the country as conducing to the benefit of cultivators and the stability of revenue'²¹ For this purpose he asked the Board of Revenue to sanction an amount of SP. 6060²² As the Board had already asked him on 28 May 1803, 13 June 1803 and 4 May 1804, he decided to commence the survey. On 4 May 1804 the Board of Revenue had asked him to introduce, in the Northern Division of Arcot, the system of 'regulating the assessment of the lands by an actual survey' which was earlier established in Baramahal and Balaghaut regions of the area under his charge²³

The settlement of (land) revenues made by Cockburn for fasli 1213 amounted to SP 904321-14-4, being an increase of SP 35597-23-56 above the preceding fasli of 1212²⁴ (after excluding certain items)

If the season had not been 'unfavourable', preventing *ryots* from 'cultivating lands to the extent for which they had engaged (agreed)', the above increase would have been much greater.²⁵

In spite of the decrease in the extent of cultivation in fasli 1213 relative to fasli 1212 we note an increase in revenue. This was achieved because of the resumption of several *inam* lands, *rusums* and *mirasis* of several classes and castes in this region²⁶ and also due to the result of investigation made into the lands just assessed, the 'discovery' of productive land not registered by the *karnams*, the so-called 'truer' ascertainment of the produce and the 'profits' enjoyed by the renters of villages²⁷

The above details show that there was 'over-assessment'²⁸ under the *ryotwari* system in the Northern Division of Arcot. It was because of this a remission was later (in 1818) recommended by Grames²⁹ Since Cockburn considered that the revenues were not 'sufficiently ascertained' in 1211 and 1212 (tenure of Stratton), the assessment was raised in fashies 1213 and 1214³⁰ But subsequently, it was found that all the settlements were 'founded on exaggerated views of means of the *ryots*'³¹ and that the local authorities (collectors) were 'too sanguine' in their original estimates of the capability of the country.³²

Under the severe and unscientific administration of the Carnatic (Arcot) Nawab's Government, the *ryots* paid a high assessment either in kind or money of their 'lands registered' as cultivated, out of the profits arising from the 'illicit' cultivation of 'other fields' or what was called by the British as 'concealed cultivation'. This was done with the 'connivance' of the inferior officers of that Government, who exempted the 'other fields' from the accounts of lands cultivated and therefore from tax.³³

But the British, apart from raising the rent, resuming *inam* lands, *meras*, *russums*, etc., closed the above source of wealth also, when they introduced the *ryotwari* settlement. 'The *ryotwari* system, with its attendant survey, rigidly scrutinizing all abuses of this kind, registered every field attached to each village, assessed thereon a fixed tax, required a correct return of fields cultivated from the curnum under pains and penalties and when that return was rendered, sent out supervisors to detect false returns, who were paid at so much per cent on the revenue thus recovered.'³⁴

Moreover, the demand for payments was made in a different manner compared with that of the ceded districts. In the ceded districts the past payments of the *ryots* were adopted as the general limit of the Government demand on the land hitherto cultivated and the amount thereof was divided on the district, then on the villages and finally assessed upon each field usually under cultivation entered in the *ryotwari* survey (whether registered formerly or otherwise). The resources of the country were not impaired, for however unequal the assessment might have been in details, the total demand on the people was not increased (except with increased cultivation).³⁵

But in the Northern Division of Arcot (and in several other 'districts'), the demand which was very high since the time of the Carnatic nawabs was not relaxed, while unregistered lands, that had been secretly cultivated and exempted from tax, were newly registered and newly assessed and the *ryot*, who was thus deprived of the means he formerly possessed for paying a high rent on his registered lands, was now called upon by the Government to pay the same high rent on his unregistered fields also.³⁶ Both these lands were included in the *ryotwari* survey. Extra assessments, *meras* in land, money and grain were also absorbed in the land rent. This 'error' in the original *ryotwari* assessment in the Northern Division of Arcot was exposed by Grames in 1818 and a remission was therefore granted by him.

Moreover, under *ryotwari* the British collected the revenue from the *ryot* 'with an exactness and rigour perhaps unknown to the native Governments'.³⁷ In several provinces the amount had been 'seriously detrimental to the resources of the country'.³⁸ 'The revenue was raised by this artificial system to a height it had never before attained'.³⁹ It was the imperatives of Government that forced it to raise the assessment.⁴⁰ It shows that the British had followed the 'shortsighted system' of the native Governments 'by regulating their demand upon the land with reference rather to the existing wants of the state than to the welfare of the country, and the future resources of the Government'.⁴¹ 'The levelling system of the *ryotwari* survey' had also diminished and annihilated the value of *mirasis* in land.⁴² Moreover,

assessments were collected everywhere in money alone⁴⁴ (and not in kind), which generally brought hardships to *ryots*. The fluctuations in the price of paddy, etc., and the immediate need for money to pay the Government forced the *ryots* to sell their paddy at a lesser rate. Thus the assessments in money, not in kind, was the essential defect of the *ryotwari* settlement in those days of improper communications and inadequate availability of small coins in places like Chittoor *pollams*.⁴⁵ Moreover, in Chittoor *pollams*, one year's payment was taken into consideration and not an average of several years, in fixing the revenue of a year.⁴⁶ Moreover, the assessment was made not on the basis of the produce but on the type of soil for both cultivating lands and garden-lands.⁴⁷ There was also no permanency of assessments. The assessments were raised at every new settlement and the collections were made sternly and the *ryot* had no choice but to abandon the land, if he failed to pay. He was forced to till and pay the Government dues. So long as he paid the revenue he was the proprietor of the land. As we have seen, in other areas there was generally no remission of revenue collection even during bad seasons.

The Collector used corporal punishment in case of default in the payment of tax. Though force was used in collecting revenue even before the British, the methods and severity of torture used by the British were unheard of in the pre-British history of India. The Commission appointed to enquire into the tortures by the British Government itself pointed out this fact.⁴⁸ The Collector Cockburn also tortured and intimidated the *mirasdars*, *poligars* and others by forcing them to sign agreements forfeiting some of their rights. He also tried to impose his will in a vigorous style. If the Company did not have at its disposal devices of rewards and punishments it would not have got any revenue. Of course these are inherent in the colonial system of administration.

Thus, by introducing the *ryotwari* system Cockburn increased the revenue of the Government and over-burdened the people. His survey system was also defective and this added to the sufferings of the people and the *poligars* (whose *kavalı* lands, etc. were also resumed and *ryotwari* was introduced in those lands).

Cockburn's settlement of the revenue was based upon the general survey of the district. This general survey was however confined to Bramahal region (under Cockburn's charge); that of the Northern Division of Arcot was for some reason delayed. But Cockburn introduced the *ryotwari* in the North Arcot also, including resumed villages or lands in Chittoor *pollams*, without proper survey (at the beginning) of the lands. It was only after June 1804 that Cockburn tried to undertake the survey but he could not do any substantial work due to the revolt of the Chittoor *poligars* and only his successor Grames completed the work. It was on 25 June 1804 that Cockburn wrote to the Board of Revenue for its sanction of *Star Pagodas* 6060 to commence the survey. Before that period only a rough method of assessment and survey was followed and the *ryotwari* was introduced. Even Grames accounts, known as the district 'Paimash' (which are valuable records), show that the survey of Cockburn was by no means an accurate one and the classification and assessment of lands do not appear to have been just. For example wet lands under some small rain fed tanks are found

classified as double crops, whereas those in some villages were entered as only single crop lands.⁴⁹ And, therefore, the *nanja* and *punja* lands bore a higher rate of revenue.⁵⁰ Because of this crude survey system there was high pitch of revenue assessment. As a result the *poligars* and the *ryots* equally suffered. It was because of this the Governor, while approving the principles of Cockburn's *ryotwari* settlement of the Northern Division of Arcot as well calculated 'to secure to the *ryot* the profits of his labour and the revenue of Government from defalcation', expressed the desire that the system which had been established in the Baramahal and Balaghat districts of regulating the assessment of the lands by an actual survey, should be introduced as early as might be practicable into the Northern Division of Arcot.⁵¹ An amount of *Star Pagodas* 6060 was also sanctioned for the expenses that would attend to the Survey.⁵² This shows that Cockburn introduced the *ryotwari* in the Chittoor *pollams* or in the entire Northern Division of Arcot even before a proper survey was made.

The survey assessment was raised so high that the privileges like the *meras* disappeared within a short time after the introduction of the new revenue settlements in the Northern Division of Arcot of which Chittoor *pollams* were a part.⁵³ In this connection R C Dutt observes : 'In the Northern division of Arcot, all these superiorities (special rights of *mirasdars* or hereditary peasant proprietors) were also resumed and incorporated with the public revenue. In short, the survey assessment was raised so high as to absorb in the Government revenue any little rent remaining to the landholders. No intermediate person was acknowledged between the state and the actual cultivator'.⁵⁴ 'Illegal exactions' of the *poligars* were also incorporated into the land rent under the *ryotwari* survey⁵⁵ (which was not an accurate one at the beginning).

Moreover, in his anxiety to extend the *ryotwari* to as many areas as possible he introduced it not only in the *sirkar* lands but also in several *amaram*, *chillur*, *kavali* (of the *Kavalgara*), *devadayam*, *kattubadi inam* villages and *manyams* of village *sibbandi*. He also introduced it in several villages of the *poligars* after resuming them in the Chittoor *pollams*. He also resumed several *chillur* and *kavali* (of the *poligars* in their capacity as *kavalgars*, their original institution) villages or lands of the *poligars* both in the *pollams* and in the *sirkar* territory (in their capacity as *kavalgars* of some villages in the *sirkar* territories) and also in the districts like Southern Division of Arcot even before the extirpation of the *poligars*, and introduced the *ryotwari* system in those regions. The *ryotwari* system therefore led to discontent among the *poligars* and the *ryots* equally. The survey system was forced upon the *poligars* also at each and every agreement with them.⁵⁶ The *amaram* villages and *inams* were enjoyed by the relatives of the *poligars* and the *chillur* villages or *inams* belonged to the 'personal state' of the *poligars*.⁵⁷ While the *kavali* villages or lands, as discussed below, were enjoyed by the *poligars* and their police peons, the *kattubadi inam* lands and villages were enjoyed by the *kattubadi* peons of the *poligars*, with whose help he administered the *pollam*.⁵⁸ Their maintenance was also considered as a part of the *poligar's* status.⁵⁹ Cockburn calculated the revenues of the *poligars* after taking

into consideration the revenues of the *kattubadi* lands and *amaram* lands also.⁶⁰ But in fact they derived nothing from them because they did not want to touch the lands of the peons on whose dependence they carried on the day-to-day administrative business and whose services they made use of in their wars.⁶¹ So the calculation of the revenues of the *poligars* was in fact defective and this led to over-assessment. The loss of all these privileges naturally created discontent among the *poligars* and their men and became one of the causes for their revolt.⁶² In places like Muttelwarpalli the *poligars* opposed the introduction of *ryotwari* and tried to resume the village lands. This contrasts with Munro's settlement which was introduced after extirpating the *poligars* and also after completing a survey of the ceded districts. Munro also did not touch the *inam* lands and *meras* of the *inamdars*.⁶³ Cockburn, we come to know, wanted to raise the revenue assessment first and make it uneconomical to the *poligars* to maintain their peons or military retainers, and then force them to revolt against the British and finally extirpate them taking it as a cause.⁶⁶ While the British were making new types of revenue settlements which were no less potent in causing social distress and economic discontent, and were introducing new laws, the *poligars* on the other hand got ready to revolt against the British for various reasons.⁶⁷

Cockburn had destroyed the judicial and the periodical land redistributing (among villagers) powers of the village communities and thereby indirectly of its members (called *mirasdars*)—in the village committee or *panchayat*—by introducing the *ryotwari patta* regulations and resuming several *amaram*, *chillur*, *gramamanyam*, *kattubadi*, and *kaveli inam* lands (or villages), *devadayam*, *dharmadayam* and *dasabandam mirasies*, fees of village *mirasdars* (or members of village committee), *baraballuti* (*ayagars* or village servants) and members of the village community and taking over several (not all) villages of the *poligars* (both *pollam* and *sirkar* villages). As a result when the Chittoor *poligars* revolted against the British all the sections of the society joined hands with the *poligars* in order to secure their lost privileges etc.

Under *ryotwari*, in the Northern Division of Arcot, the property in soil (of the *ryots*) was reduced to a mere nominal property. The *ryots* were described under it as all 'employed' in the actual labours of the field as cultivators rather than farmers,⁶⁸ i.e., all the privileged and unprivileged land-holding sections became tenants of the Government on payment of a rent and held the lands only so long as they paid the same.

Under Muslim rule the revenue collected from the *ryots* (in several districts of the Carnatic) was gradually increased by successive 'augmentations'. It included not only the whole of what in England was deemed as the landlord's rent (land tax paid to the Government) but also a considerable share of what constituted the farmer's profit after discharging the expenses of cultivation. The little that remained to the *ryot* was barely sufficient to purchase clothing and subsistence for himself and his family.⁶⁹ Under such a system the *ryot* was thus deprived, by over assessment, of any interest he formerly possessed in land. He came to be viewed as a 'villain' attached to the soil and he

was ultimately 'driven to cultivation by means of authority and compulsion'.⁷⁰ All the produce accumulated in the hands of landlords or the farmers either in the areas where the assessment was moderate or due to agricultural improvement was absorbed by the Government.⁷¹

But it was unfortunate that this system not only persisted after the acquisition of these provinces by the British Government but was carried 'by the superior ability and zeal of their local officers even to its utmost extent. Unacquainted, at first, with the real capability of the country, anxious to develop its resources and unrestrained by any check, except the apprehension of touching on sources of prosperity, the several collectors assessed upon the land the highest sum which it was at the time thought politic to impose and this . . . was collected from the *ryot* with an exactness and rigour, perhaps unknown to the native Governments'.⁷² 'In some districts the local authority so apportioned the burden as to be less severely felt, but the amount actually collected bore heavily on all, and in several provinces it had been seriously detrimental to the resources of the country. The resources were thus augmented to an extent before unknown'.⁷³ The assessment was determined by the 'fallible and fluctuating judgement' of the officer in charge of collections. He demanded all that accumulated in the hands of *ryots*. 'The revenue raised by this artificial system to a height it had never before attained, began at length to decline, and the final development of the judicial system together with certain untoward circumstances which then occurred hastened its downfall'.⁷⁴ But it took a long time. Meanwhile the *ryot* suffered a lot. The necessities and colonial character of Government forced it to raise the assessment.

The mode of payment (under *ryotwari*) in money alone also caused several problems to the *ryots*. Under the native Governments the *ryots* had been accustomed to divide with the *sirkar*, the produce of their *nanja* or wet cultivation and to pay a moderate rent upon the *punja* or dry land only. It was generally supposed by the British that with regard to the *nanja* lands they should continue to give preference to this mode of settlement. But this was not so. Rent in money was preferred by *ryots* of '*cusba*' or principal villages only. Payment in kind was desired by *ryots* in *punja* or dry lands of Chittoor district and Cuddapatnattum.⁷⁵

But the payment of land rent in money alone under the *ryotwari* system brought several evils for the *ryots*. The money system in those days had no standard coinage. There were coins of various denominations of standard in circulation. There was continuous fluctuation in the exchange of coins. The value of coins was determined by the shroffs, who 'traffic' in money as merchants do in other commodities. The prerogative of coinage was possessed by the British East India Company, the Nawab of Carnatic, the Raja of Tanjore, the Government of Mysore, the Nizams of Hyderabad, the *poligars* of innumerable places and others capable of making coins. Moreover, the coining of money of debased standard without regard to the scale which should be kept entirely between the precious metals and these coins was not properly observed. These coins from long circulation had decreased in value as they diminished in weight. Of all, the depreciated specie and the system of purchase and sale of money were

permanent evils in the system. People had only an imaginary value and he dealt in money only on the basis of intrinsic value of each at any rate he can or to which an arbitrary value was fixed by the shroffs in order to pay the rent. Though the British attempted to reform the coinage by appointing Commissioners nothing substantial could be achieved in those days of non-banking economic system and payments in kind, especially in Chittoor *pollams* where there were several coins (as in other parts) in circulation which included Porto Novo Pagodas, Pulleput Pagodas, Star Pagodas, Madras Pagodas, Arcot Rupees, Pondicherry Rupees, Cavery Pauk Rupees, Soolaukee Rupees, Aparange Fanams, Chukerry Fanams, etc. There was also a shortage of most of these coins. The latter (apart from others) was particularly very small (in quantity) in circulation. This created several problems to the people of the region in their day-to-day dealings and in the payment of their land rent. The shortage of coins was so severe that the Madras Government had to get them minted and imported a great quantity of the coins from England itself. This situation placed the *ryot* in a state of suffocating suffering.⁷⁸

As the evils and the rent demanded under the *ryotwari* system was very high in the Northern Division of Arcot several *ryots* opposed the system and started at first the non-cooperation and tax evasion (no tax) movement, as that of Mahatma Gandhi's movement of the same kind in the 1920s by leaving their villages. In some places like Madras the *ryots*, after leaving their villages, took shelter under the jurisdiction of the courts (without paying their rent or balances). For example about 34 *ryots* of the villages of Yeree and Paotweree left their villages in protest against the *ryotwari* system and stayed in Madras as it was one of the ways the *ryots* in those days expressed their opposition. They were:⁷⁹ Sholimoota, Perlakunda, Belooga, Moodata, Poneree Andee, Vemoonea, Velkotte, Velaida, Sreeram Venkatashea, Kunda, China Moonea, Koolee Rama Mootum, Sreeram Moota, Venkatadree, Putichulum, Mara, Koolamoota, Cheshramea, Pandawaraea, Tumbee Moonea, Munaea, Koolanack Pursum, Chenna Kolunda, Dendoo Chootum, Aripoo Venkatachulum, Melroopum Mootun, Jundla Mooto, Jogee Andee, Chinupaca, Mree Moonia, Nondee Venkteshea, Kureea, Velukul Kundum, Roodra. The *ryots* (and villagers) who left the other villages of the district of Chittoor in the Northern Division of Arcot were:⁸⁰ Venket Redde and Nachem Redee and China Narain Redee of Putnum, Chinnup Redee of Kutamunchee, Venkat Redee of Moodeegoolum and Venkat Redee of Kotekota village.

Though efforts were made by the Collector to persuade them to return to their villages and cultivation they remained at Madras for a long time. This kind of non-compliance with the orders of the British Government and non-cooperation movement became usual and more or less widespread in Andhra villages whenever the *ryots* felt the demand on them was very high. Their act was considered by the Madras Government as having 'unlawfully quitted the cultivation and management of their lands' 'yielding revenue to Government'.⁸¹ Therefore, the Madras Government gave a letter of authority to Gunga Ram, Vencatah Ramaiah and Shaik Nutthed 'to seize, arrest and take

the bodies' of the above said persons and carry them to the acting Collector. But it resulted in a revolt on the part of the *ryots*

As the settlement with each *ryot* was made according to the extent of land he cultivated and an increased assessment fixed on him by a separate *patta*, several *ryots* joined the revolt against the British. The *potails* and head inhabitants (also called *mirasdars*) who were deprived of their privileges, powers and profits enjoyed under the Nawab's Government, also actively participated in the revolt. These disturbances were the result of the 'highness of assessment which was far more than during the Nawab's rule'⁸² Several villagers including Brahmins, Reddies, *potails* and others 'combined' to pull down the *ryotwari* system.⁸³ About 1500 persons⁸⁴ assembled with arms in places like Ottoor and Denkemcottah. The British of course sent a force to Darampoory for dispersing the insurgents, to arrest the ring leaders and to uphold civil authority and the revolt was finally quelled without bloodshed, the ring leaders after some resistance having come in 'on cowl of security' and the *ryots* having dispersed

The *ryots* of a village near Royacottah also at first left their villages to make their point and about 30 of their ring leaders even went to Madras to submit a petition to the Board of Revenue. In order to suppress this rebellion Cockburn resorted to apprehending the ring leaders. But when he refused to release the leaders in response to a demand by the other *ryots*, about 800 to 900 of them assembled about 10 miles from Royacottah and began their '*cabal*' (revolt).⁸⁵ Among them there were about 150 matchlocks and about an equal number of pikes and swordsmen. They resisted the British authority by refusing to return to their villages unless the prisoners were set free. They also began using all means to make other *ryots* join them.⁸⁶ They were secretly encouraged by the principal men of the country.

In order to seize the ringleaders 80 sepoys, with a number of commissioned and non-commissioned officers, commanded by Captain Mearhad, were brought to Royacottah from Senkredrook (Sankaridurg). As this force proved inadequate to meet the peasants of the region two more companies were drafted from Vellore and Erode to apprehend the ring leaders and to surround the whole party of insurgents without giving scope for the revolt to spread to the other regions.⁸⁷

But the *ryots* were not shaken by these measures. Several ring leaders of the movement in fact wrote to the principal *monigars* in Tingrecottah 'district' inviting them to join the revolt. A number of *monigars* in several 'districts' of the Baramahal also received invitations of this kind. As only about 200 *ryots* of the districts of Palcode and Kistnagherry had so far joined the movement, letters were written to other *ryots* as well. Then all the *ryots* assembled in revolt against the British at a place within a few miles of the village of Palcode and along the range of the Veerbuddurg hills. At first they numbered about 1500.⁸⁸ But soon their number increased substantially. As the peasants were considered to be assembling in a 'disorderly mutinous manner' and it was felt that it was difficult 'to foresee to what lengths they may go',⁸⁹ Cockburn requisitioned 4 companies to quell the disturbance by

securing the ring leaders and dispersing the other *ryots*. Though the movement collapsed soon, it gave a strong fight to the British forces.

In this manner, when the British established their power, in several parts of the region they were confronted for many years with sustained and effective opposition to their attempt to control the activities and resort to excessive taxation. In order to understand the capacity of local agrarian groups to use techniques and strategies which were part of an ancient toolbox to prevent the state from extracting the surplus and thereby destroying the nature of the relations within the village, a look at the villagers who sought to defeat the outsiders and the penetration of the state is necessary.

In Chittoor *pollams*, as in other regions of the Northern Division of Arcot, those belonging to the higher status or dominant castes were the Brahmmins, the *Vellalars* of the Sudra caste and other head farmers like the Reddis, the *karnams*, the *kanakapillais*, the members of the village community, farmers of revenue, etc., who were also holders of *meras* and *gramamanyams*. Most of them did not do the actual cultivation themselves. The *vellalars* were the original colonizers of the area during the chola rule. The Reddis however supplanted them during the Vijayanagar rule. All these dominant castes enjoyed a hereditary right to a share of the produce of the land tilled by the tenant *payacaries* and sub-rent *oolcudies* and farm servants called *pallis* and/or *paraiyars* (outcastes). These dominant groups were also called *mirasidars* (originally called *Kaniyatchi* or *Kaniyach*). These *mirasidars* or dominant castes usually had untouchable *paraiyar* farm servants while Brahmin *mirasidars* had *pallis*, a group who were not untouchables. In some areas the *pallis* (later called *Vanikula Kshatriyas*) had in course of time become *mirasidars* themselves.⁹⁰

The relations between the *mirasidar* dominant caste patrons, and the *payacar*, *oolcudi* and the *palli* or *paraiyar* farm labourers (or agrarian slaves) were one of the most vertical relationships. In those days caste played an important role in determining power. The *mirasidars* had social and marriage networks throughout the region, reflecting their horizontal relationship. Indian society was organised by vertical lines of patronage as well as by horizontal lines of kinship. The Indian ethnic or kinship connections were very powerful. But it was the vertical relationship which was the important ingredient in their opposition to the outsiders or the state. The relations between the *mirasidars* and other agrarian classes including *paraiyar* labourers were renewed each year. Therefore the former had a hold on the latter in a fight against any outsider or the state. *Paraiyar* untouchable agricultural labourers were paid *mamool* (or customary), *tundu* (or remnant) or *kalavasam* of two or three *marakkalams* of grain for every ten *kalams* of grain beaten out on the threshing floor⁹¹ and some extra amount⁹² during the year as the former was insufficient. In the early nineteenth century, village life was hardly secure under the British. Unable to bear the burden the villagers were at first forced to employ their own tactics. One of them was the abandoning of cultivation⁹³ which results in reduction of land revenue to the state. In this the headmen, the Reddis of villages and hamlets, applied the heirarchical rule by using their own local position and by other

mechanisms at their disposal. *Mirasidars* also used the coercive mechanism of the state to harass their opponents by petitions apart from leaving their villages *en masse* or taking shelter under the jurisdiction of a civil court as already noted.

Examples of use of all these techniques by the local landed interests (including *poligars*) and their use of *payacaries*, *oolcudies* and *palli* and *paraiyar* farm labourers were numerous in the Chittoor *pollams* especially during the *poligar* revolt. An 'insurrection', 'rebellion', 'revolt', or movement also consisted of stopping cultivation, gathering other farmers and labourers who threatened violence against the British officers like Captain Nathel, Collector Cockburn and several other army and civil officers. The high caste leaders including *poligars* who belonged to *Boya* or *yakarla sudra* castes asked not only their own villagers but also other villagers to participate in the revolt; some in fact went to far away places like Kolar in Mysore to get men and material for the revolt against the British.⁹⁴ As a result, the Collector and other officers tried several times to propose terms to the *poligars* and others, to come to a settlement, but without much success. For the British revenue, peace and the stability of their authority (or political security), were important, while for the *mirasidars*, etc., their privileges, low taxes, less severity in collections and non-interference in their affairs were important.

The participation of *inamdars* like the *monigars* and other head inhabitants of villages in the *poligars'* revolt is also reflected in their effort to frequently provide misleading reports to the British army officers about the whereabouts of the *poligars* in order to give scope to the *poligars* to escape from the pursuit of the British army. British officers like Colonel J. Darley, Captain Bruce and Armstrong and several others were misled by them on several occasions. One such instance had occurred immediately after the Narganti *pollam* was taken possession of in September 1804. Apart from *inamdars*, their relatives also participated in the revolt. That a relative of a headman belonging to the *poligar* of Bangari *pollam* participated in it is clear from the Chandurkonda incident in which a villager and also Armstrong's own guides misled the army and facilitated the *poligar's* men to escape. That the other categories of *ryots* and villagers also participated in the revolt in a great number can be inferred from the British fear about their participation and the consequent British plan for separating them from the *poligars*.⁹⁵ Of course Cockburn succeeded only to a very negligible extent in separating the people from the *poligars*. Despite Cockburn's written assurance of protection only a small number of people availed written protection from Cockburn.⁹⁶ Those who received them were Muvalum Dari Cusba Kurnam Numa Shevatengal, Shevagar Karreyya, Bellam Kistna (all on 14th September 1804), Kalastry Reddy, Venkatesaiah and Chinna (all on 23rd September 1804) of Narganti *pollam*, Gopal and Guravappa of Bangari *pollam*; all the inhabitants of the village of Kulapary (on 25th September 1804) in Yadarakonda *pollam*.⁹⁷ But these were only a few cases. Several villagers continued to take part in the revolt.⁹⁸ Villagers like that of Muthelavaripalli left their homes to join the revolt.⁹⁹ This participation of entire villages including all sections was

due to the British laws relating to survey and classification, the high pitch of revenue assessments, resumption of *inams*, *miraj*, etc, that affected not only the *mirajdars* and *inamdars* but also the other common ryots.

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- 96 Cockburn to the Commissioners appointed to settle the affairs of Chittoor Pollams, dated 17 October 1804 (written from Kalgherry), *Revenue Consultations*, Vol 140, pp 4262-64
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B A PRAKASH*

Agricultural Backwardness of Malabar during the Colonial Period: An Analysis of Economic Causes

The erstwhile Malabar district of Madras Presidency, forming the northern region of present day Kerala State, is economically backward in many respects. The region was under colonial rule since the English East India Company conquered Malabar from the Mysoreans in 1792 till attainment of independence in 1947. Though Malabar had been a major exporter of a wide variety of agricultural products to Europe for more than two thousand years and consequently exposed to influences from abroad, it still remains an underdeveloped region with a backward agricultural sector.

Except for a study by T W Shea, no attempts have been made to examine the causes of agricultural backwardness in Malabar. Shea¹ emphasises six barriers to economic growth in the region, viz, the immobility of the caste structure, the traditional occupational distribution of the elite, the absence of systematic government in the pre-British period, the pattern of land tenures, the structure of family property laws and the pattern of population growth during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In explaining the barriers to economic growth, he puts forward the hypothesis that businessmen in Malabar made no concerted, systematic attempts to rationalise agricultural production, and that because of their lack of interest in bringing about changes in productive techniques in agriculture, the development inhibiting social and economic barriers were never directly challenged. Though the study highlights a few barriers to the economic development of Malabar, a major limitation of the study is that it has completely ignored the impact of colonial policies.

In this study our objective is to present an alternative explanation for the agricultural backwardness of Malabar during the colonial period, in which we emphasise two factors, viz, (1) the unfavourable and extractive policies pursued by the colonial power in the spheres of agriculture, industry, infrastructure, trade and commerce, and (2) the caste system, and the social practices arising out of the system, that prevailed in Malabar.

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THE CAUSES OF AGRICULTURAL BACKWARDNESS OF MALABAR

Agricultural Performance under Colonial Rule

The British Malabar comprised of a vast region covering an area of about 6262 square miles. It was divided into 18 taluks and 2222 villages for administrative purposes by the beginning of 19th century.² Malabar was richly endowed with natural resources such as soil, climate, rainfall, etc., favourable to the growth of a wide variety of plants and trees. A large portion of Malabar to the east is mountainous and over-run with forests.³ Some of the evergreen forests of Kerala, such as 'Silent Valley' and 'Attapady Valley', are located within the district. The climate of Malabar is also favourable to the cultivation of grain as well as plantation crops. The rainfall varies from 50 to 300 inches. The district also has a number of rivers and backwaters.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century agriculture was the chief economic activity of the people and provided the means of livelihood to the entire population except a few who engaged in trade, commerce, cotton weaving, carpentry, smithy, fishing etc. On the basis of the available information, we estimate that the population engaged in non-agricultural activities hardly exceeded five percent of the total population in 1837.⁴ The agrarian system was characterised by a hierarchy of land rights in which agrestic slaves stood at the bottom. Except for the transactions that took place in trading centres with coins, Malabar remained a non-monetised economy. The region produced a variety of agricultural products like paddy, coconut, betel nut, ginger, pepper, cardamom, and horticultural produce like jack fruits, plantains, mangoes etc. Among these products, the important items exported were pepper, coconut, coconut products, betel nut, cardamom and timber during the first decade of the nineteenth century.⁵ Pepper was the single largest export earner among the products exported and accounted for about 45 percent of the total value of exports from Malabar in 1804.⁶ Pepper was known as the 'black gold' of Malabar and the power struggles waged by the Portuguese, Dutch and English in this region were primarily with the objective of monopolising the pepper trade. Originally pepper was cultivated only in the two taluks of Malabar viz., Chirakkal and Kottayam. The composition of exports changed during the first three decades of the nineteenth century and by the end of the 1830s pepper ceased to be the largest export earner of Malabar.

Coconut and coconut products like copra, coconut oil, coir and coir products were the second important set of items exported from Malabar. By the 1840s coconut and its products emerged as the largest export earner for Malabar. Coconut cultivation was largely concentrated in the coastal regions. Coconut cultivation had not spread to a significant extent in the inland regions, because of lack of adequate irrigation and the consequent lower yield from the trees.

Rice was the staple food of the people and the principal agricultural produce. Rice was cultivated mainly in low lying wet lands and cultivation was mainly dependent on the monsoon. Traditional methods of cultivation were used for cultivating paddy. The land was ploughed several times with the help of wooden ploughs and young plants of paddy were transplanted. A common wooden plough, two hoes, a rake and a leveling instrument were the typical farming implements used for farming. Ash, cow dung, leaves and grass were generally used as manure. During the first half of the nineteenth century rice and paddy were exported from Malabar.

Coffee was introduced to Malabar around the 1820s. During 1829, the East India Company formulated a policy to encourage coffee cultivation with the objective of expanding its export and directed the Madras Government to take necessary steps. The Madras Government had announced the exemption of coffee plantations from land taxes. By the 1840s coffee cultivation was being undertaken on a large scale by European planters in Wynad taking advantage of the liberal encouragement given by the Government and the suitability of the local climate and soil for coffee cultivation.

According to Buchanan,⁷ who visited Malabar in 1800, bulls, bullocks, cows and male and female buffaloes were the important native cattle stock that existed in Malabar. The native oxen were found to be of poor breed, and smaller in size compared to the oxen of Coimbatore and Mysore. The farmers who owned cattle used to house them in small huts. Landlords possessed cows and kept them along with the labouring cattle in small sheds built for the purpose. Cattle was fed with grass for about four months and straw for the rest of the year. Buchanan says that horses, asses, swine, sheep and goats were not the native animals of Malabar. Few of the above categories of animals found in Malabar were brought from outside the region. Poultry was also not a native item of Malabar, but was brought here by Europeans. During the early decades of the nineteenth century a large number of cattle consisting of bullocks, cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep were brought from outside through Palghat.

There was not much change in the State of agriculture during the second half of the nineteenth century except for the expansion of area under plantation crops. The cultivation of coffee steadily increased and by the 1870s coffee emerged as the largest export-earner, accounting for 33 percent of the total export earnings of Malabar.⁸ The decline in the importance of pepper can be attributed to many factors. One reason was the spread of cultivation of pepper to other countries. The Dutch took pepper saplings from Malabar during the 18th century and planted them in Sumatra and other countries. The result was that by 1940s about 90 percent of world pepper came from Dutch India. The spread of a disease known as 'wilt of pepper' during the early decades of the present century badly affected the crop. It attacks the roots just below the ground and cuts off nourishment with the result that leaves turn

yellow and drop down and the whole vine soon dries up. The fall in the price of pepper, the high tax levies and unfavourable land tenures also contributed to the decline of pepper cultivation. As a cumulative result of all these, Malabar gradually lost its monopoly in world trade and by the 1940s pepper export from Malabar came to a very low level of one percent of world trade in pepper. Coffee, which emerged as the successor to pepper as Malabar's most important export crop during the second half of the 19th century maintained its position till the end of the first decade of the present century. But the coffee boom came to an end with the spread of coffee disease in the twentieth century.

Further, Malabar, an exporter of rice during the first part of the nineteenth century, began to import large quantities of rice after 1860.⁹ By the 1870s, paddy, rice and other grains accounted for the bulk of the total value of imports.¹⁰ This chronic deficit in foodgrains may be attributed to the stagnation of agricultural productivity, the slow increase in area under paddy and the steady growth of population. Due to the lack of growth of industrial or commercial activities, a vast majority of population (about 80 per cent) depended primarily on agricultural occupations for their livelihood. According to the 1881 census only 20 percent of the population was engaged in any activities outside agriculture such as in government service, the army, clergy, trade, commerce, transportation, construction, metal work, weaving, clay works etc.¹¹

The backwardness of agriculture and the lack of development of other sectors, coupled with a growing population, created a situation of chronic unemployment and consequent widespread poverty among the people. A sizeable section of the population was forced to live near famine conditions. Logan has pointed out that near famine conditions prevailed in Malabar during the months from July to September and the victims were the poorer sections of the population. Malabar under colonial rule experienced frequent famines of a severe kind in 1865, 1866, 1876, 1877, 1878 and 1890. A severe famine which raged throughout the presidency in 1865 and 1866 made its effect felt in Malabar and a daily average of 6353 people were provided relief during the five months from July to November 1866.¹² During the period from 1876 to 1878, Malabar witnessed a severe famine and the Government took relief measures by providing rice *kanji* in many places in the district to the starving people. It was estimated that more than 40,000 persons were provided with rice *kanji* during the year 1877.¹³ In 1899, Malabar faced severe scarcity of foodgrains and the government was forced to provide relief measures.

During the first half of the 20th century there was an appreciable change in the agricultural situation compared to earlier periods. But Malabar continued to remain an importer of large quantities of foodgrains. There was considerable expansion in the area under rice during the first two decades of the present century, but subsequently there was a decline in area (Table 1). The unfavourable land tenure

structure and the low share received by the cultivating tenants may be causes for the decline in area. The productivity of land under foodgrains, especially paddy was extremely also low. This low productivity was due to the lack of irrigation, non-introduction of modern methods of cultivation or chemical manures and the unfavourable structure of land tenure and land rights. The land tenure system which prevailed in Malabar offered no incentives to the cultivating tenants to increase agricultural productivity. Commenting on the low level of agricultural productivity, the Malabar Tenancy Committee had observed in 1940.¹⁴ 'The average multiple out turn was stated to be ten by the Joint Commissions in 1793 and it cannot be said that it is more at the present day.'

Wooden ploughs and other traditional agricultural implements were in use during the first half of the present century also. The available evidence suggests that Malabar had about 1.66 lakhs of ploughs in 1885 (Table 2). Ernad, Walluvanad, Palghat and Ponnani were the taluks which had a larger number of ploughs. The 1940s witnessed a rapid increase in the number of ploughs in use. There were no significant efforts at introducing modern agricultural technology till 1940, as evident from the absence of any tractors and other mechanically operated agricultural machinery (Table 3). During the 1950s we find a sudden shift to the use of agricultural equipment like electronic pumps, oil engine pumps, tractors and sugarcane crushers worked by power (Table 3). This shift can be attributed to the end of colonial rule and the change in agricultural policies of the new government.

As far as diversification of the agrarian economy was concerned, during the first three decades of this century, tea, which was introduced at the end of 19th century steadily gained ground and by the 1930s about 12,000 acres of land were brought under tea in the Wynad region. Rubber, a new plantation crop, also began to be cultivated in Malabar from the early decades of present century. The area under rubber cultivation steadily increased to 23,000 acres by 1950.¹⁶ As a result by 1950, the area under paddy accounted for 55 per cent of the total, that under coconut 25 per cent, arecanut 6 per cent, plantains 4 per cent, tapioca 3 per cent, rubber 1.5 per cent, coffee 1.2 per cent and tea 1 per cent of the total area cultivated.¹⁷

From the above review we may conclude that Malabar, a very backward agricultural economy at the inception of colonial rule, remained so till the end of that rule. Due to lack of development of the non-agricultural sectors, there had not been any substantial shift from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations and a vast section of the population was unemployed and lived under constant poverty. Famines and situations close to famine were frequent in Malabar.

REINSTATEMENT OF FEUDAL LAND TENURE SYSTEM

- The British conquest of Malabar in 1792 and the subsequent policy of recognising the *Janmi* as absolute owner of land and the wrong

interpretation given by the courts and administration of the three types of tenures such as *Kanan*, *Kulikanam* and *Verumpattom* had severe adverse effects on the agricultural development of Malabar. These steps had resulted in the creation of a feudal class of *janmies* who had no interest in cultivation, prevented emergence of a land market in Malabar and retarded agricultural productivity and expansion in cultivation.

The original system of land tenure of Malabar was customary sharing of produce, with each customary sharer being permitted to transfer his interest in land freely. The sharing of the produce of each *janmom* holding was, in particular, a matter regulated by customary law, which the *janmi* was not at liberty to break. The share of produce left over after providing liberally for cultivating costs was styled *pattom*, that is *pad* (authority's share).¹⁸ Long before the Mysorean invasion, hereditary property (*janmom*) was freely bought and sold in Malabar. And it was this buying and selling, and in particular the wording of the deeds in which transactions were recorded, that misled the early British administrators about the land tenure system that existed in Malabar. Without properly understanding the customary land-relations that existed in Malabar for centuries, the British interpreted the *janmi*, who had no interest in cultivation and who considered farming as an inferior occupation earmarked for agrestic serfs and the lower castes, as absolute owner of land. In the words of Logan:¹⁹ 'The essential difference between a Roman dominus and a Malayali janmi was unfortunately not perceived or not understood at the commencement of the British administration. The janmi has by the action of the Civil Courts, been virtually converted into a dominus, and the result on the workers, the cultivators, has been, and is, very deplorable.'

One of the major consequences of this new land policy of the colonial rulers was that it legalised the feudal land relations that existed in Malabar and made *janmies* a powerful class, who no longer depended for power and influence on protective rulers. Logan provides an illustration about the *janmies*.²⁰

The big *Janmies'* property is scattered widely over the face of the country and is rarely held in compact blocks capable of effective management. Most of them do not know where much of their property lies, having never even seen it. They do not know the persons who cultivate it and do not concern themselves as to whether their tenants sublet or not. Most of them care nothing for the welfare of the tenants. Moreover, the men employed by these big *janmis* to manage their scattered properties are all men of common education, who get very small pay, and their chief duty is to grant receipts for rent collected.

As a result of this new land tenure policy, the other co-sharers like *Kanakaran* and *Verumpattakaran* were pushed down to the status of

mere tenant. In the feudal structure the *janmi* stood at the top while the agrestic serfs stood at the bottom of the hierarchy. Farming was undertaken either by the poor *Karan* or *Verumpattom* tenants or by a class of agrestic serf known as *Cherumar*. A large proportion of the agricultural workers were, in the southern part of the district, until mid 1800s, slaves, subject to purchase, sale and transfer with or separate from the land they tilled. Though slavery was abolished in 1843 by the colonial rulers, the agrestic slave system continued in Malabar because of the feudal land ownership structure that existed. In a stagnant, backward agricultural economy, the serfs, who do not find any other occupation outside farming, were forced to live as serfs. By 1857 Malabar had about 1.87 lakhs agrestic slaves, accounting for 12 percent of the total population, who lived mainly in grain producing taluks.²¹

Another result of the new land tenure policy was that it prevented emergence of a land market in Malabar, which is one of the preconditions of commercialisation or capitalist agriculture. When *janmies* were conferred absolute ownership of land, they became legal owners of vast areas of waste land, cultivable waste land and forest lands. As a class, which had no interest in the land, they found it advantageous to sublet the land, retaining their ownership right and earn an income, *pattom*, without making any effort from their side. Since the colonial administration favoured eviction of tenants, the *janmies* could evict the tenants without any difficulty. As a result of this, sales of land became fewer and almost the entire ownership of land in a village was vested in *janmies*, temples and native rulers. Village studies²² conducted during the first decade of this century in three villages of Malabar, found that owing to prestige and social importance of land ownership big *janmies* never sold their land even at high prices. The ownership of cultivable waste land and forest land by *janmies* also discouraged cultivation of coffee, tea, rubber and teak.

The extent of land ownership concentration that prevailed in Malabar during the 1880s was evident from the tax return statement of Malabar. Of the total tax assessment, 78 percent was paid by landlords whose average amount of land tax varied from more than Rs. 10 to more than Rs. 1000 (Table 4).

A third consequence of the new land tenure policy was that it did not provide any incentive to cultivating tenants to increase productivity, make permanent improvements or resort to extensive cultivation of waste lands and forest lands, leading to stagnation of the agricultural sector.

The wrong interpretation given by the colonial administration and courts about traditional tenures such as *Kanam*, *Kulikanam* and *Verumpattom* had virtually resulted in loss of security of tenure and reduced the share of produce enjoyed by tenants.

As a result of Court rulings the *Kanam* tenure became sometimes a lease or a mortgage or a mortgage lease. According to Logan, *Kanam*

right in the traditional sense was the right to supervise or to protect all the inhabitants of a particular *Nad* or country, and for this service a portion of net produce equal in amount to that enjoyed by the *janmi* was paid to *kanakaran* or supervisor.²³ At the time of the British take over of Malabar, the net produce was being divided equally between *kanakaran* and *janmi*. But due to wrong interpretation, the *kanam* amount was later considered an advance of rent given by a tenant to a *janmi* as a security deposit against failure of payment of *pattom* dues. Later as a result of court rulings the holder of *kanam* tenure was made liable to renew the *kanam* at the end of every twelve years.²⁴ The court ruling helped the *janmies* to evict a tenant after 12 years or demand a sum for renewing the *kanam* tenure. This measure had a very adverse impact on the *kanakaran* since it destroyed security of tenure, which in turn prevented tenants from making any improvements in land. The practice of renewal fees also created a situation in which tenants might lose their tenantry, if they made any improvements in land. When they make improvements in land, it became more productive and the *janmi* could offer the land to others at a higher rate of renewal fee and *kanam*. So the wise policy appeared to be not to make any improvements in land leading to increased productivity.

Later another development took place with regard to *kanam* tenure, which completely did away with the security of *kanam* tenure. This was the practice of putting a clause in *kanam* deeds which required that the *kanakaran* should return the land 'on demand' before the expiry of 12 years, introduced around the 1860s. Such clauses were recognised and enforced by the courts with grave injustice to the cultivator. And the power of eviction conferred upon the *janmi* had completely nullified the security which used to prevail. Logan observed.²⁵ 'The common *kanam* tenure has degenerated into an outrageous system of forehand renting, favourable only to the money lender.'

In case of *Kulikanam* tenure also, the courts rulings were highly unfavourable to the interest of the tenants. The Courts viewed the payment of compensation to *kulikanam* tenants not as a compensation to the cultivator for his customary share, but as a compensation for the customary share due to the *janmi*.²⁶ The courts ruling of the power of ouster of a *kulikanam* tenant had completely neutralised the benefits the cultivator derived from his power to sell or subdivide the holding. The low rates of compensation recognised by the courts were highly inadequate when compared to the actual cost of improvements valued at current market rates. For crops such as coconut, betel nut, jackfruit, etc. it takes more than 12 years to bring the trees into full bearing. And during these initial years, the annual expenses are very high. Hence, the tenant will be a loser if he is evicted at the expiry of 12 years.

The courts also viewed *Verumpattom* as a tenure extending for a period of one year, unless the lease specifically provided for otherwise, which was quite contrary to traditional practice. At

beginning of colonial rule, *Verumpattom* cultivators used to plant up gardens and reclaim wastes and they were regarded as actual cultivators-cum-part-proprietors. They were also permitted to sell or subdivide their holdings. The colonial rulers had curtailed all these privileges and rights enjoyed by them and pushed them to the status of tenant-at-will.

As a result of the above developments, by 1860's a large number of eviction suits were filed in courts by *janmies* against the tenants. Within a period of 20 years, the number of eviction suits filed were more than doubled (Table 5). Logan observed.²⁷ 'About one in every twenty cultivators has now a decree for evictions passed annually against him, and the rate of increase has more than quadrupled itself in 20 years. In Palghat alone, the number of evictions annually decreed is now 12 times more numerous than it was twenty years ago.'

Using the facility of eviction, *janmies* also had filed eviction suits against tenants who possessed land from very early times. As a result of the filing of suits the tenant was always the loser, owing to courts costs and other expenses, though deprived the value of improvements due to him.

The recognition of waste land, cultivable waste lands and forest lands as *janmom* land, had also discouraged expansion of cultivation of crops especially commercial crops, construction of public irrigation works, and stood as a major obstacles to agricultural development. In Malabar, almost the entire waste land was treated as private property of *janmies*. By the 1840s all the waste land in Wynad taluk was in the hands of a few *janmies*.²⁸ When coffee planting was started in Wynad, one of the problems faced by the European planters was the difficulty in getting land for plantation, though large areas of land were available there.²⁹ The entire land belonged to the *janmies* and one had to purchase it or take it on lease from them. The first attempt to plant rubber on a large scale at Ingapuzha at the foot of Tamarasseri ghat was not successful due to the problems connected with the title deed.³⁰ For planting teak at Nilambur, the colonial government was also faced with the same problem of procuring land, and land was procured either by purchase or lease.³¹ While examining the reasons for the lack of government sponsored irrigation projects, the Malabar Tenancy Committee (1940) had found that because waste land, including river beds, was private property, government had difficulty in acquiring those lands for irrigation projects. To quote the Committee:³² 'One of the obstacles to state schemes of irrigation is that all land including the beds of rivers, streams and canals, is regarded as private property and the government cannot, therefore, interfere with the rights of private owners by constructing irrigation works'

Thus large areas of cultivable waste land and forest land remained uncultivated in a region where severe unemployment and shortages of foodgrains existed. Though about 66 per cent of the area in Malabar was cultivable, only 44 per cent of the area was actually cultivated in

1881 During the period from 1890 to 1940, we find that of the total area of Malabar, cultivable waste land accounting about 20 to 25 per cent remained uncultivated (Table 6) We can attribute this to the wrong land policy of the colonial power which created a situation where Malabar heavily depended on a large volume of foodgrain imports to feed its population, when vast areas of cultivable land remained uncultivated It was also paradoxical that despite the fact that vast areas of land remained uncultivated, a large number of people migrated to places outside Malabar in search of employment

COLONIAL EXTRACTION OF A LARGER SHARE OF AGRICULTURAL SURPLUS

We do not have a clear idea about the land tax system that existed prior to the colonial period.³³ Buchanan, who visited Malabar in 1800, gives some hints about the extent of land revenue paid by the cultivators³⁴ According to him the Pattom or rent paid for a *Paray* sowing of land in Palghat region varied from 5 to 2 *Paray*'s of grain depending on the number of crops cultivated. On an average, rent for one crop land may be about 2.25 *Paray*'s for one *Paray* sowing. And leaving rent and other expenses of every kind, the cultivating tenant was entitled to get a net gain of about 40 per cent of the gross produce. If we calculate the value of the rent received in kind at the low prices prevailing at harvesting season, the landlord would be required to pay about 84 per cent of his rent as land tax On the other hand, if he sold the rice at other seasons, he was required to pay about 60 per cent of his rent as land tax Buchanan considered this as one of the highest rates of land tax, prevailing in any part of India at that time, which acted as a great disincentive for cultivation. He noted that vast areas of rice land and coconut gardens remained deserted due to the high tax (26 per cent of the gross produce) that prevailed in northern Malabar.

In 1804, Thomas Warden,³⁵ Collector, had described the method of sharing total produce between tenant, *janmi* and government that prevailed in Palghat region. The cultivator got two-thirds of the total produce, one fifth of one third of the produce went to *Janmkar*, and four fifths of one third went to the government as land tax. It was pointed out that due to the very low prices that prevailed for rice, the share of rice earmarked for payment of tax was not sufficient to pay the amount and the cultivator was forced to sell a part of his own share to pay land tax Thomas Warden attributed this as a major reason for the widespread poverty and perpetual indebtedness among the Malabar peasantry

With a view to remedy the extreme inequalities of assessment that prevailed, the colonial administration had introduced a new guideline for revenue assessment on 21 July 1805³⁶ Accordingly, for wet lands and garden lands the following rates were fixed. (1) On land, after deducting from the gross produce, the seed and exactly the same quantity for expenses of cultivation, and allotting one-third of the

balance as the cultivator's share, the residue or *pattom* was to be divided in the proportion of 60 per cent and 40 per cent between government and *Janmi* respectively and the government's share was to be commuted into money 'under a consideration to local value of the several articles in the different districts'; (2) on garden lands, one third of coconut, and jack tree produce was deemed sufficient for the *kudian*, the remainder or *pattom* was to be equally divided between the government and the *Janmi*, (3) on dry grain lands, the government's share was to be half of the *janmi's varam* or what was actually cultivated during the year

The result of this standardization of revenue assessment was that the colonial government and the *janmies* were entitled to a larger share of total produce as their share, when compared to their previous position. In the new definition of gross produce, the customary shares of produce given in harvesting operations to carpenter, blacksmith and others amounting in all to about 20 per cent of the gross produce were not deducted.

Secondly, according to the new method of assessment, the total cost of cultivation was defined as the amount of seed required and exactly the same quantity for expenses of cultivation. This implies that for clearing land, ploughing, sowing, transplanting, manuring, watering, etc., the cultivator was entitled to get a measure of produce equivalent to the quantity of seed. Thus the share of produce earmarked as cultivation cost was highly insufficient for grain crops. The cultivators of garden crops such as coconut, betel nut and jack trees were also provided with a very low share of the total produce (one third). The crops, especially coconut and betel nut, required regular watering in dry seasons and the share earmarked to cultivators of these crops was very meagre.

Another serious problem created by the new assessment was the calculation of tax in money terms. Due to lack of development of roads, other a transportation net work and marketing system, there were considerable variations in the prices of the same agricultural product in different taluks. But for tax purposes the money assessment fixed was uniform throughout Malabar. This affected the tax payers adversely in taluks where the prices were lower. Because of the extremely low prices for agricultural products that prevailed in Malabar till 1831, the cultivators, especially those belonging to north Malabar, were forced to pay a larger share of their produce as tax as compared with their counterparts in south Malabar.

Thus as a result of this new assessment, the colonial power was able to enhance land tax rates and extract about 35 per cent of the total produce as land tax. On the other hand the cultivators share had decreased from about 66 per cent or two-thirds of the total produce to 42 per cent (Table 7).

In 1866, an official attempt was made to find out the exact share of total produce received by actual cultivators and the share given as

pattom in Chevayur village, located near Calicut town (Table 8). Two plots of land were selected for the study, which were cultivated by Verumpattom tenants. It was found that in single crop paddy land, out of the total produce, the rent entitlement of the landlord accounted for 42 per cent and land tax for 8 per cent, implying that the net gain to tenant was just 20 per cent. In case of double crop land the net gain to the *Verumpattom* tenant was 27 per cent. But the estimate seems to be an overestimate as the author takes the full value of rice and straw and fails to include the cost of manure, credit, renewal fees paid, and the customary share given to other persons like the village barber, etc. If we include the above items in the cost of cultivation we find that the net share received by the cultivating tenant will be hardly ten per cent of the total produce. Logan's enquiry relating to certain plots of land in 1881 also revealed that the actual cultivator, after paying rent, government assessment and amounts paid on entry or renewal, had left to him a share very much less than the early British administrators had intended.³⁷ Because of the low share of gross produce received by the cultivating tenants, they were always in poverty and debt. Logan who examined the indebtedness of cultivators found that 56 per cent were in debt, owing on average Rs. 395 per head.

The important reasons for the indebtedness were, house and land improvements, purchase of stock, excessive rents, renewal fees, fines, bad seasons, wedding expenses and maintenance of families (Table 9). It is evident from the table that 26 per cent of the persons incurred debt in order to maintain their families and another 15 per cent due to excessive renewal fees and rents.³⁸

Neglect of Irrigation and infrastructure

Total neglect of irrigation and infrastructural works also contributed to the backwardness of agriculture. During colonial rule, the rulers had made no attempt to construct irrigation projects which would help to expand cultivation. By 1800, agricultural operations were carried out mainly with the help of rain and only in a few places of south Malabar, a second crop was cultivated with the help of small water reservoirs, constructed and maintained by farmers.³⁹ These reservoirs gave water only for a few weeks. In the geographical survey of Ward and Conner in the 1820s, it was revealed that Palghat and Bettudnad were the taluks where irrigation facilities existed.⁴⁰ In Bettudnad taluk with the help of natural streams, a few areas were irrigated. The report pointed out the destruction of vast areas of crops due to overflow of rivers and streams in rainy seasons. No attempts were made to construct bunds to save crops from floods. P. Clementson, Collector of Malabar, in his report in 1838 stressed the need for changing the agricultural policy by constructing irrigation projects to promote agriculture. Here, Clementson argued for providing irrigation because he feared that if it were not provided, it would affect agricultural production and thereby the revenues of government.⁴¹

During first part of the nineteenth century till the 1860s public works mainly consisted of road, communications, military and civil building works.⁴² Here the interest behind these expenditures was to strengthen road and communication systems to facilitate quick movement of troops. But since 1879, a small amount was earmarked for repairing tanks, channels and small anicuts.⁴³ The amount was so small that it varied between 6 and 14 per cent of total public works expenditure of imperial funds. During 1880s some attempts were made to construct a few small tanks, channels, anicuts and wells, bringing about 23,635 acres of land under irrigation by the end of the 1880s, mainly in four grain producing taluks viz Ernad, Walluvanad, Palghat and Ponnani (Table 9).

Even during first half of the present century, there was no considerable change with regard to irrigation facilities. By 1951, besides a number of tanks, canals and wells, Malabar had about 49 anicuts inclusive of three minor dams.⁴⁴

The neglect of development of road and inland water transportation was another factor which adversely affected agricultural development. In the pre-Mysorean period, the country was split up into small principalities and roads were not a necessity. During Mysorean rule, roads were constructed taking into consideration the requirements for military movements. A few roads were constructed connecting the interior places of Malabar till the middle of the nineteenth century. Because of the numerous rivers and backwaters, it was not possible for bullock carts to carry goods from one place to another especially in the rainy seasons, without constructing bridges. This very much affected the marketing of the agricultural products and resulted in stagnation of prices for the products. It was pointed out that even by the 1880s, there was no considerable shift in traffic from water ways to road transport, due to the lack of a road net work connecting interior areas of Malabar. To quote Logan⁴⁵ 'The chief traffic of the country was and in great measure still is, carried on as already alluded to in this sector of rivers etc. by water and not by land.'

No attempts were made to improve the waterways till 1865, when measures were taken to construct a few canals having a distance of 46 miles. Instead of considering ferries as public utilities, colonial rulers viewed the ferries numbering about 250 as sources of revenue to government. Tolls were levied at these ferries, the collection of which was generally leased out to renters. Though the colonial government earned a considerable amount as revenue from this account even from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the government had not spent any amount for its improvement till the 1860s.

LOWER PRICE FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

The general level of prices that prevailed for agricultural products were lower throughout the colonial period. By 1800 A.D. we have evidence to show that lower prices prevailed for paddy and landlords were forced to sell a larger share of paddy for paying land tax.⁴⁶ Logan

pointed out that, during the early decades of 19th century, up to 1831, prices of agricultural products were 'abnormally low'.⁴⁷ Clemenston also discusses the very low prices prevailed for grains in 1935 and the consequent decline in price of labour and land.⁴⁸ Though there had been a marginal increase in prices in 1831, 1833 and 1836, the general level of prices of agricultural products continued to remain lower till 1850s.⁴⁹

But there had been a marked change in prices of agricultural products such as paddy, ginger, pepper and coffee since 1852.⁵⁰ This price hike had provided some relief to cultivating tenants due to increase in their incomes. But with the higher prices, the landlords now found it more profitable to lease his land to tenants who were prepared to pay a higher amount of rent. Consequently this had also led to filling of a large number of eviction suits, since 1860s. Thus in effect the greater part of the benefit of this price hike had gone in favour of the land-lords.

Between 1860 and 1880, though there had been a marginal increase in the price of paddy (3%), prices of ginger, coconut and arecanut registered a fall.⁵¹ A significant aspect of the prices were the wide variation in the prices prevailed in different taluks of Malabar for same commodity. The price of paddy varied between Rs. 82 and Rs. 72 per 1000 Maclead seers in 1880. In the case of ginger we can notice a variation between Rs. 125 and Rs. 239 per 1000 Maclead seers. There were also considerable variations in the price of coconuts and arecanuts prevailed in different taluks of Malabar. This wide variation in prices of agricultural products can be attributed to lack of development of road and other communication net work, marketing facilities and the widespread unemployment prevailed leading to less demand for products. The low prices, made agricultural activities an unprofitable occupation and acted as a great disincentive to agricultural development.

IMPACT OF COLONIAL POLICIES IN NON-AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

During the colonial rule, the policies followed by the colonial power on imports, exports and taxation had very unfavourable effect on the generation of economic activities and employment outside agricultural sector. The policy of importing large quantities of mill made cotton cloth had destroyed the cottage weaving industry that thrived in some parts of Malabar. As early as 1800 A.D. cottage weaving handloom units producing coarse varieties of cloth existed in a few places of South Malabar. The observation made by Clemenston, Collector of Malabar in 1838, gives an idea about the extent of damage done to the industry by the import policy of colonial government. To quote Clemenston:⁵²

Malabar has never been famous for manufactures—coarse cotton cloth is manufactured in the Palghat and Temalpooram Taluks and here and there on the coast, the vast quantity of Europe piece goods

imported—and which are procurable at very cheap prices—have discouraged this branch of industry, so much so that the poorer class find it more profitable to turn their lands to agriculture

Besides cloth, a large number of consumer goods were also imported to Malabar, discouraging the growth of cottage industries. By the 1880s its industries consisted of weaving, coffee and ginger processing, oil extraction, coir making and manufacture of toddy and liquor.

But by first half of 20th century, there had been a slight change in the position and a few large scale industries were started. The important large scale industries include, cotton spinning, weaving, saw mills, match factories, brick and tile works, handloom weaving, coir factories and printing works, employing about 2883 persons in 1951. The cottage and small scale industries also witnessed some change. The important industries coming under this sector were cotton spinning, weaving, rope making, mat making, manufacture of dairy products, fish preservation, manufacture of beedies, copper and bellmetal works, pottery and basket making. The total employment in this sector was found as 62,221 by 1951 Census.⁵³

The colonial taxation policy also stood as a barrier to expansion of economic activities and employment generation outside agricultural sector. Colonial administration imposed taxes on skilled workers such as carpenters, ironsmiths, etc. and also on implements such as handlooms, oil presses, fishnets, etc. We have evidence to show that a very high rate of tax was levied on this category of people during the early decades of 19th century. The toddy tappers were required to take licenses and had to pay tax at the rate of one silver Fanam per month or Rs 2 and two-fifth per year in 1813.⁵⁴ A direct tax was also levied on the fishing net, and the hut of fishermen, thereby discouraging fishing activities. The policy of declaring salt as a state monopoly and importing the entire quantity of salt from outside Malabar has resulted in loss of employment to many fisher-folk whose side occupation was salt making.⁵⁵ The ferry tax was levied in such a way that it favoured the rich people with tax concessions while full rates of tax was collected from poor people. To quote Sullivan⁵⁶ in 1841

The ferry tax in Malabar is one respect more obnoxious than that of the tobacco tax. All the classes are subject to the latter but while the carriage and the palanquin of the wealthy are allowed to pass toll free, the poor woman whose livelihood depends upon the bundle of sticks which she is carrying cannot pass until she had paid—so hardly does this tax press upon the lower orders that lives have been lost in attempts to swim the rivers for the purpose of avoiding it.

Taxes were also levied on carpenters, ironsmiths, boatmen, gold and silversmiths and on implements such as looms, oil presses, fishermen

nets and carts. Houses, shops and bazars were also not spared from the tax (Table 11). Instead of encouraging this skilled category of people to engage in productive occupations, the colonial power had discouraged them and even prevented them to engage in productive occupations through the wrong extractive policies of taxation. The ultimate result of this policy was that people were either prevented or discouraged from moving from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations.

THE INSTITUTION OF CASTE SYSTEM

The institution of caste system and its associated evils of caste pollution and system of inheritance stood as a major social obstacle to agricultural development in Malabar. The Nambudiri Brahmins, descendants of Aryan settlers of Malabar, were able to introduce a caste system in which they installed themselves as undisputed masters in the society. Castes were arranged in a hierarchical order from the highest and most sacred to the lowest and least worthy. Caste system also recognised caste pollution. Every man considered himself polluted by the touch of one of a lower caste, and there were castes low in social scale which mutually convey pollution to each other. Again, there was a recognised scale of distance at which members of each of the polluting castes must stand from a man of higher caste or his house.

In the caste hierarchy Nambudiri Brahmin stood at top followed by foreign Brahmins, Nayars and their sub groups, Tiyas, artisan group such as Kammalans and at the lowest bottom Parayas and Pulayas, constituting agrestic serfs. The Nambudiri Brahmins, a priestly caste and dominant land owners of the district were, the least commercially oriented and most tradition-bound people of Malabar. For generations subsequent to colonial rule, they firmly rejected exposure to western education and took no active part in commerce, industry or civil service. Their consumption habits were meagre and rigidly subscribed by tradition. They deliberately avoided social contact with other lower castes except ruling Nayars, on the ground of caste pollution. By custom they were prevented from other occupations except religious exercises and had no interest in cultivation, which they considered as an inferior occupation meant for lower castes. A Nambudiri Brahmin's typical life style is depicted by Innes as follows ⁵⁷

A Nambudiri should rise very early at about 3 A.M. and immediately bath in a tank; he should then proceed to his religious exercises in temple. After that and till eleven O'clock he should read or recite the Vedas; then comes the principal meal followed by a period of rest, including the keeping of solemn silence. At sun set he should bath in oil and then again resort to temple till 9 p.m.

In the caste hierarchy, Nayars and their sub-castes like Kurup, Nambiar, Adiyodi, Pillai, Kartha, etc. enjoyed a dominant position.

because of their relation with Nambudiris through '*sambandham*'. In the pre-colonial days, they played the roles of statesmen, soldiers, administrators and almost exclusively engaged in activities directly or indirectly connected with warfare. As a caste whose tradition was warfare, the Nayars imitating the Nambudiris also considered cultivation as an inferior occupation.

Next comes Tiyyas, a lower cast in the caste hierarchy, with traditional occupation of toddy tapping. During the course of colonial period, they have emerged as a commercially oriented caste engaging in all economic activities such as cultivation, industrial activities, commerce, trade etc. Below them comes the section of polluting castes such as *Mukhuvas* or fishermen, Kammalans, goldsmiths, carpenters and blacksmiths. And at the bottom of the caste hierarchy was the agricultural serf known as *Cherumar* consisted of Pulayas and Parayas, who have no recognised place in society. The agricultural serfs consisted the section of population, who supplied almost the entire labour for cultivation to the landlords and higher caste tenants.

Thus the caste system of Malabar did not recognise agricultural occupation as a respectable. And farming work became a degraded work of the lowest castes, who neither had ownership of land, nor had a fair share of agricultural produce as the reward for their labour. The practice of caste pollution and consequent untouchability, unapproachability and restricted inter-course between various castes living in a society, prevented occupational mobility and stood as an obstacle to the economic development of Malabar. It retarded expansion of activities in agriculture, commerce and industry by preventing movement of working population from custom-bound occupations to new occupations outside agriculture. The tradition-bound life styles of various castes prevented introduction of new goods, new consumption habits and limited their wants and material requirements.

The inheritance laws followed by various land owning castes also acted as a major barrier to agricultural development in Malabar. The Nambudiri Brahmans and Nayars were the two castes of dominant land owners possessing the larger part of the land consisted of cultivable lands, waste and forest lands. Among them let us examine the inheritance systems of Nambudiri Brahmans. The Brahmans followed a type of patrilineal system of inheritance in which the eldest son alone was recognised as legal heir of property. Till the enactment of Nambudiri Act of 1933⁵⁸ the eldest son alone was recognised as the legal heir to inherit properties of a Nambudiri family. It is interesting to note that only eldest son alone was allowed to marry a Nambudiri girl, while younger brothers were given freedom to have relations with Nayar girls through '*Sambadham*'. The clever Brahmans made such a tradition primarily with objective to preserved landed properties of the family from sub division or transfer of its ownership to outsiders. This had resulted in concentration of land ownership in a few hands and totally prevented transfer of ownership.

And vast areas of cultivable, cultivable waste and forest land in villages began to remain under the ownership of a few Brahman janmies who neither cultivate land nor prepared to sell land, due to prestige and social importance of land ownership. Even if waste lands were given for improvements, because of extreme uncertainty prevailed with respect to security of tenure, tenants would not be prepared to make any significant improvements in land.

Village studies in Kothachira (Ponnani Taluk) and Vatanamkurussu (Walluvanad Taluk) in 1918 revealed that owing to prestige of land ownership, owners never sell their lands even for good prices unless driven to it by extreme necessity. To quote A. Krishna Warriyer⁵⁹

An acre of land costs from Rs. 200 to Rs. 300. But purchases on janmi tenure are worth above Rs. 500. But it is impossible to acquire janmion property except for *janmies*, for the *janmies* are jealous guardians of their lands and never sell lands once acquired. Direct threatening and indirect intimidation are used by them to obtain the *janmion* right of lands if held by any lesser land owner.

Thus the system of inheritance which prevented transfer of ownership from a class of feudal *janmies* who had no interest in cultivation, to actual cultivators, stood as a barrier to the emergence of a land market, which is considered as a prerequisite for capitalist development in agriculture.

The next dominant land owners were Nayars, who followed matrilineal system of inheritance known as '*Marumakkathayam*'. The *Marumakkathayam* joint family or *tarward* consisted of all the descendants of a common ancestress in female line only. The *tarward* property is joint property of all members and each member is entitled to get maintenance right, but not entitled to claim partition. But partition may be effected by a mutual agreement between all the members. In a *tarward*, every member is entitled to dispose the property acquired by him as he wishes, but at death any property which may not have been disposed of by gift or otherwise will lapse to the *tarward*. It is usually managed by the eldest male member termed *Karnavan*, who can only be removed for mismanagement only by a decree of a civil court.

Though the Malabar Marriage Act of 1869 provided for the optimal registration of *sambandham*, it had not become popular due to the provisions containing legal obligation to maintain wife and children and restriction imposed on a formal divorce. But the enactment of the Madras *Marumakkathayam* (Matrilineal Inheritance) Act of 1933,⁶⁰ contributed towards the disintegration of the *tarward* system.

The system of inheritance had a very unfavourable effect on agricultural development. Firstly it prevented transfer of property from the *tarward* to the members of family thereby giving opportunities for them to utilize the land in a better manner, secondly it resulted in mismanagement of properties because vast areas of landed

property were owned by *tarwards*. Thirdly, it created a lot of discontent and frustration among its younger members, because they were not given a chance for better management or better utilization of land. Thus the system of inheritance discouraged more intensive as well as extensive cultivation. It also stood as an obstacle to create favourable conditions for the emergence of a land market. Even after the enactment of the Act in 1933, free sale of the *tarwards'* properties became not so common because of frequent disputes between numerous members and the difficulty in obtaining a clear title of land from the legal owners. It is common that the number of legal owners in most of the cases were more than 200 per family.

To sum up, the foregoing analysis has shown that, despite the fact that the areas under cultivation of various crops had shown an increase during the colonial period, the agricultural sector remained as backward. The colonial policies such as reinstatement of feudal land tenure system, neglect of irrigation and infrastructural works, extractive taxation on skilled category of workers, native productive equipments, etc. and the unfavourable policies on trade and industry had prevented the process of agricultural development. The social institution of caste system and its associated evils and the inheritance system followed by the dominant land owning castes also stood as major barriers for any change favourable to agricultural development.

TABLES 1-11

Table 1 Area under rice

Year	Year under Rice	
	(Acres)	Index Number
1890-91	9,09,534	100
1900-01	7,17,051	118
1910-11	8,53,030	140
1920-21	8,88,711	146
1930-31	8,79,291	144
1939-40	8,61,744	141
1950-51	8,15,000	134

Source (1) Govt of India, *Agricultural Statistics of British India*, for the years 1890-91 to 1894-95, 1900-1901 to 1904-05, Vol I, and 1906-1907 to 1910-11, Vol, I (2) Govt of Madras (Board of Revenue) Season and Crop Reports of Madras Presidency for the agricultural years 1920-21, 1930-31 and 1939-40 (3) Govt of Madras, Season and Crop Report of Madras State for the Agricultural year 1950-51

Table 2 *Agricultural stock*

Year	Carts		Plough		Boat	
	(Nos)	Index No	(Nos)	Index No	(Nos)	Index No
1884-85	6,521	100	1,66,257	100	3,296	100
1890-91	8,544	131	1,69,136	101	N A	-
1899-1900	10,284	157	1,65,687	99	N A	-
1909-10	12,529	192	1,68,977	101	N A	-
1919-20	13,720	210	1,89,739	114	N A	-
January 1930	12,119	185	1,81,363	109	N A	-
January 1940	10,961	168	1,73,190	104	7,860	238
Census 1951	10,927	167	2,47,900	149	N A	-

Source Government of India, Returns of Agricultural Statistics India for the year 1884-85, Agricultural Statistics of British India for the years 1890-91 to 1894-95, 1900-1901 to 1904-05, 1906-1907 to 1910-11, Government of Madras, Season and Crop Reports of Madras Presidency for the agricultural year 1920-21, 1930-31, 1939-40 and Season and Crop Report of Madras State for the 'Agricultural Year 1950-51

Table 3 *Agricultural stock in Malabar*

		January 1940	Census 1951
1	Sugarcane crushers worked by power	3	588
2	Sugarcane crushers	202	
3	Oil engines with pumps for irrigation purposes	57	428
4	Electric pumps for tube wells	8	54
5	Tractors	Nil	21
6	Oil Mills	2,200	N A
7	Looms	13,755	N A
8	Ghanis	N A	1,533

N A Not Available

Source Government of Madras, Season and Crop Reports for Madras Presidency for the Agricultural Year 1939-40 and Season and Crop Report of Madras State for the agricultural year 1950-51

Table 4 Pattern of land ownership

Pattas	Number of pattas		Total pattas		Land tax	
	Single	Joint	Total	%	(Rs)	%
1 Below Rs 10	1,41,272	4,090	1,45,365	80.96	3,86,400	21.61
2 Above Rs 10 & below Rs 30	21,054	927	21,981	12.24	3,70,188	20.69
3 Above Rs 30 & below Rs 50	5,336	260	5,596	3.12	2,10,672	11.78
4 Above Rs 50 & below Rs 100	3,894	151	4,045	2.25	2,73,671	15.30
5 Above Rs 100 & below Rs 250	1,956	73	2,029	1.13	2,99,651	16.75
6 Above Rs 250 & below Rs 500	393	8	401	0.01	1,35,395	7.57
7 Above Rs 500 & below Rs 1000	98	4	102	0.01	68,726	3.85
8 Above Rs 1000	28	1	29	-	43,662	2.45
Total				100.00		100.00

Source William Logan, Malabar, Vol II P 9

Table 5 Number of evictions

Qualificational periods	Average	Annual number of	
	Suits of evictions	Persons against whom eviction decrees have been passed	Rent decrees, excluding small cause suits against persons
1862-66	2039	1891	1473
1867-71	2547	3483	2549
1872-76	3974	6286	4314
1877-80	4983	8355	6498
Five years ending 1896	3178	2352	N A
Five years ending 1901	2951	2175	N A
Five years ending 1904	2604	1705	N A

Source 1 William Logan, Malabar, Vol I, p 583

2 Innes C A, Malabar, Vol I (Madras Govt of Madras, 1951) p 234

Table 6 Classification of area

Year	Cultivable waste other than fallow	(%)	Net area sown during the year	(%)	Total cropped area (net area sown + land under misc trees and crops)	(%)	Total geographi- cal area
(Acres)			(Acres)		(Acres)		(Acres)
1890-91	723,307	20.2	909,812	25.4	1,025,895	28.7	3,575,452
1900-01	1,197,677	33.3	940,225	26.1	1,173,065	32.6	3,597,110
1910-11	958,277	25.8	1,309,545	35.3	1,586,375	42.8	3,708,410
1920-21	970,077	26.5	1,308,966	35.5	1,672,916	45.8	3,655,279
1930-31	944,408	25.0	1,489,112	40.0	1,762,632	47.6	3,705,907
1939-40	864,167*	24.0	1,517,672	42.0	1,798,884	50.0	3,595,777
1950-51	N A		1,674,158	45.0	1,962,435	52.9	3,713,105

* Other uncultivated land excluding current fallows

Sources 1) Govt of India, *Agricultural Statistics of British India for the years 1890-91 to 1894-95, 1900-1901 to 1904-05 Vol I and 1906-1907 to 1910-11 Vol. I* 2) Govt of Madras (Board of Revenue), *Season and Crop Reports of Madras Presidency for the Agricultural Years 1920-21, 1930-31 and 1939-40* 3) Govt of Madras, *Season and Crop Report of Madras State for the Agricultural Year 1950-51*

Table 7 Land revenue assessment

		New assessment* dt 21st July 1805	Assessment rates in 1801**	
For wet lands	Paras of paddy	Percentage	Percentage	
1 Gross Produce (5 Para X 15)	75	-	-	
2 Deduct cultivation expenses (5 paras for other expenses)	10	-	-	
Net produce	65	-	-	
3 Cultivators share (one third of net produce)	21 66	-	-	
4 Total share of cultiva- tor (21 66 + 10)	31 66	42.2	66.6	
5 Govt's share as land tax (60% of the pattom of 43 34 paras)	26	34.7	26.8	
6 Janmi's share (40% of the pattom of 43 34 paras)	17 33	23.1	6.6	
Total		100.00	100.00	

*William Logan, Malabar Vol I, P 665

**Report of Mr Thomas Warden, Collector dt 19th March 1801 on the Conditions of Palghat, Congasid etc of the District of Malabar, P 8

Table 8 Cost of cultivation and cultivator's share (in 1866)

Description	Single crop land (Kamal)			Double crop land (Karnal & Magaram)		
	Rs	Ans	%	Rs	Ans	%
1 Area	One acre			92 cents		
2 Land	4 - 14		8 1	3 - 2		3 0
3 Rent	25 - 0		41 7	32 - 0		32 0
4 Seed	6 - 0		-	12 - 0		-
5 Cultivation expenses	12 - 2		-	26 - 0		-
6 Total cost of cultivation	18 - 2		30 2	38 - 0		38 0
7 Net gain to tenant	12 - 0		20 0	26 - 14		27 0
8 Gross produce (inclusive of the value of straw)	60 - 0		100 0	100 - 0		100 0

Source Cameron J Report of the Village of Chevayur 1866 (Calicut Malabar Govt Press, 1868) P 8

Table 9 Indebtedness of cultivators (1881)

Reasons		Number of persons	Percentage
1	House and land improvements	736	12 9
2	Purchase of stock	182	3 2
3	Excessive of stock	221	3 9
4	Excessive fines, renewal of leases etc	644	11 3
5	Bad seasons	1,222	21 3
6	Loss of stock	214	3 7
7	Wedding and ceremonies	671	11 8
8	Sickness	114	2 0
9	Family maintenance	1,498	26 2
10	Others	207	3 6
Total		5,709	100 00

Source Malabar Special Commission 1881-82, Malabar Land Tenures Report, Vol I (Madras Govt of Madras, 1896) Chapter IV, Para—89

Table 10 Source of irrigation belonged to Govt (by the end of 1880's)

Taluks	Tanks		Channels		Anicuts		Wells	
	No	Average extent of cultivation within the last 5 years (Acres)	No	Average extent of cultivation within the last 5 years (Acres)	No	Average extent of cultivation within the last 5 years (Acres)	No	Average extent of cultivation within the last 5 years (Acres)
Ernad	8	82	97	3073	4	95	252	318
Walluvanad	174	1467	61	4347	-	-	55	496
Palghat	1354	5001	82	2213	24	1690	-	-
Ponnani	158	485	12	575	5	3639	-	-
Cochin	-	-	-	3	172	-	-	-
Total	1694	7035	252	10208	36	5596	307	814

Source Wilham Logan, Malabar, Vol II P 24

Table 11 Particulars of Moturfa Tax levied

Items taxed	1833 A D		1863 A D	
	No	Amount of tax (Rs)	No	Amount of tax (Rs)
1 Houses	1,68,075	89,391/-	98,304*	82,568
2 Shops and bazars	6,073	8,719/-	11,497	12,040
3 Looms	3,150	3,106	5,018	3,339
4 Oil Presses	2,840	3,377	5,555	4,790
5 Gold and Silversmith	730	411	1,287	647
6 Carpenters	1,895	1,107	3,534	1,769
7 Iron Smith	799	452	1,333	625
8 Boatman	888	1,138	2,126	1,964
9 Fishermen's net	409	3,278	8583,014	
10 Pack Bullocks	1,483	847	4,131	1,446
11 Carts	-	-	3,214	3,197
12 Other Sundries	-	928	-	2 838
Total	-	1,12,754	-	1,18,237

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- 2 Ward and Corner, *A Descriptive Member of Malabar, 1821*, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1901, p 1
- 3 The rich variety of forests of Malabar may be classified into six classes viz (1) Zone of deciduous forests, (2) Tropical evergreen forest, (3) Evergreen shola forest, (4) Scrub shola forest, (5) Mixed deciduous and evergreen forest and (6) Heavy deciduous forests For detailed discussion of the forests of Malabar see William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol I, Govt of Madras, 1951, reprint, Chap 1
- 4 The total number of shops, looms, oil presses, gold and silver smiths, carpenters, iron smiths, boatmen and fishermen nets on whom the Moturfa tax levied was 16,784 in 1833 Assuming that shops, looms and oil presses employ more than one person and taking the possibility of underreporting, we may place three times of the above figure as the total employed in non-agricultural activities It works out to be 43 per cent of the total population of Malabar in 1837
Source *Statistics of Malabar 1873-74*, p 23
- 5 Clementson P, *A Report on Revenue and Other Matters Connected with Malabar*, dt 31 December 1938, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1914, p p 19-23
- 6 Ibid p p 19-23
- 7 Buchanan, Francis A, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol II, Madras, Higgin Botham and Co, 1870, p p 74-76
- 8 William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol II, p 36
- 9 *Statistics of Malabar 1873-74*, p 17
- 10 In 1876-77, of the total imports of Malabar, grains inclusive of rice and paddy accounted 62 per cent of the total value of imports Source William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol II, p 35
- 11 William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol II, p p 6-7
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- 14 *Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee*, Vol I Madras, Govt Press, 1940, p 14
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- 18 William Logan, *Malabar Special Commission 1881-82*, op cit, Chapter IV, para 3

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- 29 Robinson W , *Report on the History, Condition and Prospects of the Taluk of Wynad dt 22nd August 1857*, op cit , p 9
- 30 Innes C A , *Malabar*, op cit , p 227
- 31 Bourne R , *Nilambur Valley Working Plan*, Vol I, op cit , p 40
- 32 *Malabar Tenancy Committee (1940)*, Vol I, op cit , p 50
- 33 It is often cited that during the Mysorean rule, Arshed Beg Khan, the Mysorean Governor had introduced a systematic land tax system, which was later copied by the early colonial rulers of Malabar But Logan points out that prior to colonial rule, the country was not settled enough for the introduction of any systematic land tax system Logan further says that the Joint Commissioner in 1792-93 obtained from a Brahman named Jinnea, a statement purporting to give details of Arshed Beg Khan's settlement of southern portion of the district for the year 1784-85, and on this basis they framed guidelines for the introduction of tax system in the southern districts But later in 1822, it was proved beyond doubt that the information supplied by Jinnea was false See William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol I, op cit , p p 621-627
- 34 Buchanan, Francis, op cit , p 66
- 35 Thomas Warden, op cit , p p 7-10
- 36 For the text of the proclamation, see William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol II, Appendix V, p 250
- 37 William Logan, *Malabar Special Commission 1881-82*, op cit , Chapter IV, paras 1600-162
- 38 Logan says that the reasons attributed to excessive renewal fee, and rent are probably under-reported because the tenants give the information in the presence of landlords or their agents
- 39 Buchanan, op cit , p 69
- 40 Ward and Conner, op cit , p 86 and 138
- 41 Clementson P op cit , p 3
- 42 *Statistics of Malabar 1873-74*, p 19
- 43 William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol II, op cit p 22
- 44 *1951 Census Hand Book—Malabar District*, op cit , p 4
- 45 William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol I , op cit , p 62
- 46 Buchanan says that landlords had to pay a larger share of rent ranging from 60 per cent to 84 per cent as land tax to the government because of the low prices prevailed The land tax was required to pay in money See Buchanan, op cit , p 67
- 47 William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol I, p 614
- 48 Clementson P , op cit , p 4
- 49 William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol I, p 614
- 50 Ibid , p 718
- 51 William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol II, op cit , p p 252 & 254-56
- 52 Clementson P , op cit , p 2
- 53 *1951 Census Handbook—Malabar District*, p 13
- 54 Thomas Warden, *Report on the Revenue System in Malabar, dt the 10th June 1813*, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1916, p 4
- 55 Ibid , p 4

76 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

- 56 Sullivan, *Report on the Provinces of Malabar and Canara dt 29th January 1841*, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1916, p 6
- 57 Innes C A , *Malabar*, op cit , p 106 See also William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol I, p 156 and 157 for a detailed list of customs of Malabar Brahmans
- 58 The main provisions in this Act were that the younger Nambudiris may marry Nambudiri girls and that the Illom property can be inherited by these younger sons Because of the new law, there was a gradual change, and many Illoms weree dividing mainly due to quarrels between the members For details see Adrian Mayar C , *Land and Society in Malabar*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1952, Chapter 5
- 59 Krishna Warriyer A , in Salter Gilbert (ed), op cit , p 177
- 60 This Act made *tarward* partiable and legalised inheritance from father to son The effect of the Act had led to split up both the partilineally and matrilineally inherited estates Before this Act, a Nayar Tarward could divide only with the consent of the Karnavan A *tarward* under this Act can divide if it has previously been voted as a potentially divisible *tarward* by a majority of its members

RAGHABENDRA CHATTOPADHYAY*

*Liaquat Ali Khan's Budget of 1947-48 :
The Tryst with Destiny*

I

The period of the Interim Government of 1946-47 is usually discussed in the existing historiography only in connection with the issues involved in the process of the Transfer of Power. The power struggle between the Congress and the Muslim League is a favoured topic. We draw a blank if we search for any discussion on the economic steps taken during this first experiment in self-government for the sub-continent. Occasionally one finds a mention of the formation of the Advisory Planning Board by Jawaharlal Nehru as the leader of the first Interim Government. The Budget controversy, however, is seldom mentioned in the literature. The present article attempts to fill in the gap and establish that Nehru's 'tryst with destiny' actually began a few months before the sub-continent achieved its freedom from British rule.

The first Interim Government after the general election of 1946 in British India was formed by the Indian National Congress in September 1946. The Muslim League had initially declined the offer by Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, and then joined the Ministry in November 1946. The relation between the Congress and the League, never congenial, was at a particularly low ebb at that time. The persistent refusal by the latter to accept the Cabinet Mission's plan and to join the Constituent Assembly proposed by the Mission did not help the relation. However, the League's decision to join the Ministry in November 1946 necessitated a redistribution of Government portfolios hitherto held by the Congress members. The League demanded at least one of the major portfolios like Home, Defence or Finance. Wavell suggested to the Congress to give up the Home Department which Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel strongly refused to part with. As an alternative, the Congress offered Finance, till then held by Dr. John Mathai, to the League hoping that because of the technical nature of the subject, the latter would either decline the offer or 'soon make a fool of themselves in it'.² In this judgement the Congress leaders proved entirely wrong. The Muslim League not only accepted the Finance portfolio but Liaquat Ali Khan, its nominee to that post, performed his task so well that the Congress was later to regret its own

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decision. It is not only that Liaquat used the key position of Finance effectively enough to intervene in the work of all those Departments which were headed by the Congress members, but he gave a 'shock' when he presented the Budget for the year 1947-48 to the Legislative Assembly.³

II

Removal of economic inequalities and transition to a socialist pattern of society were stated as the two major objectives of Congress policy since at least 1929. Its election manifesto of 1946 also reflected this emphasis.⁴ Moreover, during and after the war, the Congress, through its leaders like Nehru and Azad, had publicly denounced those industrialists and businessmen who had taken advantage of the war situation to make money through profiteering. It had in fact demanded strong action from the Government against these people who had not only earned excess profit during the war but also evaded a large amount of income tax by avoiding disclosure of their earnings.⁵

Liaquat Ali Khan apparently took the Congress at its word and framed a Budget ostensibly based on Congress declarations. He introduced proposals to impose new taxes on business activities and to appoint a Commission to enquire into allegations regarding unpaid taxes and devise possible means of their recovery from businessmen and industrialists. He openly said that his proposals were based on the declarations of responsible Congress leaders, and 'admitted that but for the statements that Jawaharlal had made, he might never have thought about the matter'.⁶

The expenditure side of Liaquat's Budget did not show any drastic change from the pattern existing in the previous years. Defence expenditure, which constituted more than sixty per cent of the total, was outside the purview of the Interim Government. Liaquat and Nehru, however, were able to persuade the Viceroy to curtail this expenditure by around fifty crores in the Budget of 1947-48. This curtailment enabled Liaquat to increase the Budget for civil expenditure by Rs. 30 crores in a total of Rs. 327.88 crores.⁷

But it was in the revenue side of the Budget that Liaquat could show his acumen. Against an estimated total expenditure of Rs. 327.88 crores the total revenue estimated stood at Rs. 279.42 crores at the existing levels of taxation. This would leave a prospective gap of Rs. 48.46 crores as a deficit for the year 1947-48. But, in deference to the long-standing demand of Indian nationalists, Liaquat proposed the abolition of the Salt Tax. This, in his assessment, would entail a loss of Rs. 8.25 crores as revenue. He also raised the minimum level of income for taxation from Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 2,500 per annum, leading to a further loss of revenue of Rs. 25 lakhs. Thus the total deficit in his Budget amounted to nearly Rs. 57 crores.

To meet the budgetary deficit, he proposed some new taxes, direct as well as indirect, aimed at extracting revenue from big business, both

Indian and foreign-owned. The most important of these was a special income tax of 25 per cent on business profits exceeding Rs. 100,000 per annum. He emphasized that the minimum level of Rs. 100,000 corresponded to the 'standard profit' defined by the Excess profit Tax Act introduced by the Government during the war years. The yield of revenue under this heading was estimated at Rs. 30 crores for the budgetary year.

The second direct tax proposed was a capital gains tax to yield a further revenue of Rs. 3.5 crores. This tax was aimed against those who were making quick money by transfer of capital assets which had undergone rapid revaluation due to the war situation. To spare ordinary individuals with moderate asset holdings, Liaquat proposed a relief from the taxation of profits made from capital transfer up to Rs. 5,000 a year. The proposal also distinguished between gains made from the disposal of capital assets held for two years or less and those held for more than two years. The latter were exempted from the 'super tax'.

Yet another direct tax devised to yield further revenue was the corporation tax. This was increased from one anna to two annas (i.e. from $1/16$ to $1/8$ of a rupee), to yield Rs. 4 crores for the year. While raising the minimum level of income from Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 2,500 for income tax, Liaquat also intended to change the structure of super-tax rates applicable to high individual incomes. The existing maximum rate of 62 per cent super-tax was applicable beyond Rs. 350,000 for unearned income and beyond Rs. 500,000 for earned income. He proposed to lower this limit to the level of Rs. 120,000 for the unearned income and Rs. 150,000 for the latter. Thus, he estimated, could yield an additional revenue of Rs. 2.5 crores for the year.⁸

Among the indirect taxes, it was proposed to increase the export duty on tea from two annas to four annas (from 12.5 per cent to 25 per cent of a rupee) per pound. This was estimated to yield additional revenue to the extent of Rs. 4 crores, but as pointed out by the Finance Minister, the duty was of a 'temporary nature' and it might be necessary to reduce the rate if there was any danger of curtailment of India's exports of tea due to this duty.⁹

While the abolition of the Salt Tax and increasing the minimum level of income for taxation were intended to bring some relief to the poorer sections of the population, Liaquat's new taxes were directed against big business and other excessively wealthy people. In fact he had another arrow pointed at big business. Archibald Fowland, the last British Finance Member, had imposed in the preceding year a new tax on business dividend aimed not so much at raising revenue as at discouraging the dissipation of a company's resources through payments of excessive dividends. Under Rowland's scheme, 62 per cent of the earnings of a company were allowed for dividends. Liaquat intended to decrease this rate to 42 per cent through taxation. No yield was estimated from this tax on dividend as the measure was a

deterrent one, and it was expected that the companies would keep their dividend within the limit to avoid paying this tax. The total amount of extra revenue expected from all these new taxes was estimated, after deduction of Rs 4 crores as provincial share, to be nearly Rs 40 crores leaving a deficit of Rs 17 crores in balance.

The Budget really stirred up the entire business community, both Indian and British, who were soon up in arms against Liaquat. The stock exchanges in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were closed indefinitely in protest against the tax proposals.¹⁰ The big business houses, and the Press under their control, denounced the Budget as a 'murderous one' intended to destroy the economy by choking off all business activities in the country.¹¹ The Budget was so obviously directed against big business that the reaction of the latter was hardly surprising. We do not intend analysing the merits or demerits of that Budget here. The Finance Minister in fact defended his case very well indeed in the Assembly.¹² However, what is more relevant for the purpose of our present argument is to study the reactions of various political pressure groups to the proposals contained in Liaquat's Budget.

Before framing his Budget, Liaquat had discussed its underlying principles with his Cabinet colleagues. He had pointed out that his principles were based on the declarations of Congress leaders against profiteering by big business, and Congress members in the Cabinet had found no difficulty in approving them. After preparing the Budget, Liaquat, on Wavell's advice, discussed it with Nehru and Matthai (now holding the portfolio of Transport) and both of them appeared to be in agreement with the proposals.¹³ By convention, the Budget was placed before the Cabinet the day before its presentation to the Assembly. Apparently the proposals 'went down quite well' at the Cabinet meeting.¹⁴ But once the Budget was published and the reaction of big business was known, the Congress members in the Cabinet changed their attitude.

The leaders of the Congress now came out in public to denounce the Budget as a 'clever device' for discrediting the party by giving a 'most unpractical turn to both the Congress demands, that is, those for Governmental action against profiteering and tax evasion'.¹⁵ Liaquat's taxation measures, they argued, 'would have impoverished all rich men and done permanent damage to Commerce and Industry'. Congress leaders like Patel and Rajagopalachari were violently opposed to the Budget and felt that Liaquat was 'more concerned to harass industrialists and businessmen than to serve the interests of the country'. They even charged that the Budget was based on communal considerations motivated to harm the members of the business community, the majority of whom were Hindus.¹⁶ Many other Congress leaders who participated in the discussions on the Budget in the Assembly spoke in similar terms in defence of business interests.¹⁷

The reaction of the right-wing elements in the Congress leadership like Patel and Rajagopalachari was not surprising. They were well known for their pro-capitalist views. The reaction of the socialists in the Congress were also predictable. They were clearly happy with what a section of the Press called 'the poor man's Budget'.¹⁸ But surprising indeed was the reaction of Nehru, the champion of Congress socialism, who now joined Patel and Bhabha in writing to the Viceroy a few days after the Budget was published, dissenting from the record of the Cabinet meeting that had earlier endorsed it.¹⁹ This was, of course, a desperate move by the Congress leadership, including Nehru, to deny their responsibility as Cabinet members of defending the Budget. Nehru's desperation was evident in his inaugural address to the annual session of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) when he said that although it was 'not proper' for him as a member of the Government 'to discuss proposals of Government' there, he was sure that if the members of the FICCI pointed out 'anything that could be done better' or anything that was 'injurious to the country's cause', that would 'produce an effect' on the Finance Member and he would 'think about it and consider' how he could 'find some way' to placate them.²⁰ The members of the FICCI who were already up in arms against Liaquat's Budget could expect no better encouragement from Nehru. Nehru was, in saying this, obviously dissociating himself and by implication his party from Liaquat's Budget. Liaquat on the other hand, legitimately claimed that the Budget was the responsibility of the entire Cabinet and not of the Finance Member alone.²¹

The Budget was of course supported wholeheartedly by all Muslim League members of the Cabinet and the Assembly. Many of the Congress 'back-benchers' in the Assembly also lent their support to this 'poor man's budget'.²² But there was at least one non-League Indian Cabinet Member to defend it in public. John Matthai, representing Christian minority in the Cabinet and until then a close associate of Nehru and other Congress colleagues, pointed out in his speech in the Assembly that, in spite of the new proposed taxes, the burden of direct taxation upon industry and trade was actually Rs. 40 crores less than the burden in the previous year. He challenged the contention of its critics that the tax rates would discourage new investment by lowering the expected rate of return to capital. He also warned the business community that if private enterprise put their money into business at much higher rates of return than the Government could allow, then 'the country would have to face seriously the question whether it (was) in its interest to continue private enterprise, whether it (was) in its interest that capitalism should have a longer lease of life'.²³ Matthai was never known for his sympathy to the cause of socialism. His outburst could only have been an expression of disgust.

Liaquat did not succeed in getting his tax proposals approved by the Assembly without modification. In the face of stiff opposition from the

supporters of big business, he himself suggested that the tax Bills be sent up to a Select Committee of the Legislature for further examination²⁴ Big business and its related interest groups tried to manipulate the Select Committee but failed²⁵ The Committee approved the Bills with minor modifications to the proposals for the tax on business—the rate was lowered from the proposed 25% to 20% Even this did not solve the problem for Liaquat. Many of the supporters of big business within the Congress in the Assembly appeared determined to oppose the Bill After its defeat in the Select Committee, the Congress was anxious to avoid any further loss of face and a possible split within its ranks on this issue It now demanded a new discussion in the Cabinet on Liaquat's proposals The latter objected to reopening the discussion in the Cabinet but had to agree to the Viceroy's advice to the effect that he should have informal talks with his Cabinet Colleagues²⁶

Big business continued to mount pressure on Liaquat through the Congress.²⁷ Ultimately Liaquat was compelled to accept drastic modifications which reduced the anticipated yield of the new taxes by over 50 per cent The chief modification made was in his tax proposal on business profits The tax abatement of Rs 1 lakh, as proposed initially, was replaced by an abatement of 6 per cent on capital, and the tax rate was reduced from 25 per cent of the profit to 16.75 per cent on residue profit after abatement The exemption limit for capital gains tax was also raised from Rs 5,000 to Rs 15,000²⁸

III

The controversy over Liaquat Ali Khan's Budget proposals exposed very clearly the stand of the dominant leadership of the Congress on the question of socio-economic reforms Whatever might have been Liaquat's 'real' intention in proposing such an anti-capitalist Budget—Maulana Azad thought it was to discredit the Congress—his public declarations were aimed at moral and social objectives of a progressive nature He opened his Budget speech by saying that unlike his predecessors—the British finance Members—he did not take his task merely as that of balancing revenue and expenditure, but 'to even out the glaring disparities between the income levels of the few who were the wealthy class and the poverty-stricken masses'.²⁹

By contrast the Congress as a party and Nehru in particular, stand discredited by their attempt to subvert the Budget. The disparity between their oft-repeated profession of egalitarianism and social justice and the actual nature of the policies they adopted needs no further exposition While arguments may be found to justify Nehru's role, the fact remains that for the sake of the unity of the Congress Party, he was ready to sacrifice not only his socialist ideals but even abdicate his sense of responsibility Within the Cabinet of the Interim Government the majority were in support of the Budget Even Rajendra Prasad, a 'rightist', who was the Food Minister, supported it³⁰ Had

Liaquat undertaken to force a vote on the issue in the Assembly, he would perhaps have carried the day

In fact, Liaquat considered himself to be on a 'strong wicket' but was persuaded by Wavell, the outgoing Viceroy, not to 'fight the battle in the Assembly' to save Lord Mountbatten, Wavell's successor, from the embarrassment of a 'contentious Cabinet meeting at once' (Mountbatten was to take over from Wavell in two days' time)³¹

But it was not only on the question of the Budget that Liaquat Ali Khan faced such stiff opposition from big business and its supporters within the Congress. On at least two other related issues Liaquat's proposals and attempts made with similar fate

The Taxation Enquiry Committee proposed by Liaquat to go into the question of tax evasion was not pursued seriously by either the interim Government or the Congress Government of Independent India. The Income Tax Investigation Commission set up in 1947 faced foul weather in its course of investigation and by 1949 the Commission was virtually made defunct when Nehru the then Prime Minister of Independent India, instead of bringing the tax evaders to the book, appealed during a speech in the Parliament to those whose cases were being investigated to quickly compound their taxes. He also assured them that they would be spared any blame.³² The black marketeers of the war period who continued to amass undeclared wealth thus enjoyed complete reprieve from any punitive action by the state

Another illustration of the Congress's keenness to defend the bourgeoisie during the period of the Interim Government is the history of the Commodity Prices Board. Liaquat, in his crusade against price manipulation by big business, set up this Board in February 1947 to advise the Central Government in regard to price fixation of controlled commodities and also to suggest what new commodities should be brought under Governmental price control. He justified the appointment of the Board on the ground that 'there was no co-relation between the prices of commodities of various kinds' and that it was necessary to have a 'scientific method of stabilisation' of prices.³³ The Commodity Prices Board consisted of two members, Mr. A. D. Gorwala, I.C.S. as its President, and Professor D. R. Gadgil of Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics as a Member.³⁴ The Board was abolished in September 1947 when they both resigned in protest against the way in which its recommendations were treated by the Congress Government of what had become by then independent India. N. V. Sovani, who was a close associate of Dr. Gadgil in the Gokhale Institute, wrote on the issue that 'the programme of action visualised by this Board through the various reports it submitted, was a middle-of-the-line programme which refused to allow the capitalists to reap undue profits but did not necessarily lead in the direction of the extinction of private enterprise, or even any large step in the socialisation of industry'. Yet the work of the Board, in Sovani's words, 'got support only from the Muslim League members and the Departments controlled by them'. The Congress Party

felt it necessary to nullify the work of the Board and succeeded in reducing it to importance' To substantiate his observation, Sovani went on to cite examples of different decontrolling measures adopted by the Congress Government immediately after coming to power in total disregard of all recommendations of the Board ³⁵

IV

The Budget of 1947-48, as we have observed, was in no way a revolutionary one. It was at best a populist Budget framed to discipline the big business who had been reaping exorbitantly high rates of profit since the war period. The reaction of different groups of people affected either economically or politically by this Budget makes it an interesting study throwing new light on the relations and inter-relations between the newly emerging India state and the power-groups associated with the process of this state formation.

We have four broad categories of responses exposed here. First, that of Liaquat Ali Khan and his supporters in Muslim League; second, of the radical elements within and outside the Congress who would be against the League on the question of communalist division of the country but who found it necessary to support the Budget so wholeheartedly because of its populist and anti-big business content. Pitted against these two forces were the Indian big business group and their direct champions within the Congress. This constituted the third group. The fourth category of response was represented by Jawaharlal Nehru who had initially lent his support but withdrew later—obviously under pressure from his Party colleagues.

So far as Liaquat and his League were concerned, the task was simple. They had produced a Budget which went against the interest of a large section of the Indian big bourgeoisie. The Budget was prepared ostensibly based on the professed ideals of the stalwarts of the Indian National Congress including people like Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru. The onus now lay on others to refute the justification of such a Budget. The League was essentially grounded on a communalist support-base and this allowed the leaders a degree of freedom to fire salvos against big business, knowing full well that the reaction of the latter would only popularize their action. Being a Party professedly based on a minority community they did not have the responsibility to run the Government. The brunt of any potential disequilibrium arising from the action proposed by the Budget would have to be borne by the coalition of which the League was a minority partner. The situation thus allowed Liaquat to take a radical posture vis-a-vis the question of curbing the power of the big bourgeoisie in the Indian economy.

It could be pointed out that the same person—Liaquat Ali Khan himself—failed to adopt similar measures as the Prime Minister of the newly formed Pakistan only a few months after this episode. Be that as it may, in February–March 1947 Pakistan was still a dream for the

Muslim League. Even if we accept a sceptic's point of view that Liaquat's was a calculated move to embarrass the Congress, the fact remains that the Congress did put themselves in an embarrassing position. Liaquat opened his Budget speech proudly announcing that he was the first Indian Finance Member in British India to formulate a Budget and then went on to proclaim the norm of social justice as the basis of his Budget. He pointed out that 'India [was] a land of glaring contrasts and disparities [where] on the one hand a class of multi-millionaires [were] rolling in wealth and holding the economy of the country in their grip by exploiting for their own profit the labour of the poorer class, and on the other hand [were] the vast multitudes who eked out, somehow or other, a miserable existence precariously near the starvation line. A set of conditions [the war, etc.] in which the few [were] able to wield such vast power over the many [could] hardly be regarded as anything but a negation of the principle of social justice'.³⁶ In summing up his speech, again, he did not fail to chastize big business for its opposition to his proposals. 'In the changing India we cannot hope to get those profits that were made in the past. Everyone has got to make a sacrifice—if you can call it a sacrifice—for the general good of the masses of this country. If they [big business] do not help us India will still be industrialised. If Russia could industrialise in a short period why not India? We do not want to stifle private enterprise, but if private enterprise is not willing to take up a helpful attitude and assist us in the economic improvement of this country there are other methods by which we will have to do it'.³⁷

Here he echoed John Matthai. Neither Liaquat nor Matthai were socialists. What Liaquat attempted could be turned into a sound Budget policy acceptable in populist terms. This populist logic was not lost even to the British. Although British enterprises in India were also vehemently opposed to the taxation proposed, the measures appeared to be appropriate even to Pethick-Lawrence, the British Secretary of State for India and Burma. He admitted that 'there can surely be no doubt that any government in India which looks for popular support must use its fiscal machine to correct in some measure the enormous disparities in wealth and the accompanying concentration of economic power in a relatively few hands'.³⁸ We should note here that this admission was not for popular consumption. This observation gains in significance when we remember that the Budget not only generally affected the British interest adversely, the doubling of the export duty on tea was directly going to hit the United Kingdom, the largest importer of Indian tea, the industry itself being overwhelmingly owned by the British capitalists.

The reaction of the second category of respondents would be simply ideological. The populist nature of the Congress politics up to that time allowed a degree of freedom to radical elements. Nehru himself was known within and outside the Congress as a supporter of the left-wingers. That many a junior Congress member supported the Budget is

not a surprise. The rampant nature of profiteering by a large section of the business was common knowledge since the war days. These supporters of the Budget also cited information relating to the share markets as examples of war time profits. Most of the shares of established companies had gone up by 300 to 600 per cent over the years since the end of the war. One example given was that of the Tatas whose shares with a face value of Rs 100 were being quoted at about Rs 2000—a 400 per cent increase over 1938–39.³⁹ These facts would explain partly the sharp reactions of the share markets against the Budget.

The stand taken by the bourgeoisie also was not unexpected. It was only natural that the targets of this Budget would try to protect themselves. But if we accept John Matthai's contention and analysis then the vehemence of their challenge could be far more than protecting their immediate interest. It could very well be a manifestation of their concern in laying down a proper relation of power between themselves—big business in India and the newly emerging state. The Budget was the first confrontation between the newly emerging state—the British decision to withdraw from India before 1948 had been already declared—and the Indian capitalist class which was striving hard to establish itself as the most important force in India within the power structure of the state. It was probably the recognition of the importance of this confrontation, rather than the Budget itself, that made the latter challenge so vigorously the authority of the state to control and curb the power of big business in India. The bourgeoisie won this first battle decisively. The ramification of this battle and its results would be evident if we survey the state's efforts during the immediate post-independent years. Throughout the fifties big business in India dictated its terms to the newly independent state regarding economic policies. All the measures to curb their power, proposed either by the Interim Government up to August 1947 or by the newly instituted independent Government of India were either thwarted or forced to be shelved in the face of mounting pressure and threat to stop production by big business.

Finally, Nehru's reaction. It would be a trivial observation to suggest that the Budget exposes Nehru's hypocrisy. The episode makes clear the irreconcilable contradiction between Nehru's personal disposition to radical populism and his inability to conceive of any alternative to Indian National Congress that could fulfil his aspiration to become the leader of the nation. The contradiction emanated from his populist vision itself. His humanist approach to the question of socio-economic inequality of the existing system was sufficient to make him a 'left' oriented anti-imperialist activist. But he was never found to have formulated any reasoned and structured thesis to actualize his vision of a socialist India. This contradiction between the intellect and the will was irresolvable. Since at least 1929, when he returned from Europe imbued with socialist world outlook, Nehru is known to have capitulated in favour of the stronger

pressure group within the Congress on many occasions involving ideological issues. In 1929, as the President of the Congress, he was the author of a very radical resolution of the party which called for a 'revolutionary' and 'fundamental structural change' of the society.⁴⁰ Within two years he conceded to modification of this resolution with a view to placate the angry and worried zamundars.⁴¹ In 1936, soon after his famous anti-capitalist speech, he back-tracked in the face of open criticism from a section of big business in Bombay. After 1937 elections, his early opposition to allow the provincial committees to form governments gave way to whole-hearted participation in ministry-making politicking. His role in the confrontation with Subhash Bose and Gandhi after the Tripura elections is well known. These are only a few of the instances when Nehru changed his position from left-radical stand to a conformist right-wing and pro-capitalist one. As we have seen in the episode under scrutiny, in 1947, Nehru again made a volte-face.

Nehru's support to Liaquat's Budget proposal at its preparatory stage could come only from a genuine concern regarding the undisciplined nature of capitalism in India. Nehru had always declared that economic prosperity and its equitable distribution were the key to solving the country's different social problems. Even during the regime of the Interim Government, when the entire sub-continent was embroiled in communal strife, Nehru had firm conviction that 'of all India's problems the economic one was the most serious'.⁴² That he attached the highest importance to the economic remedy is evident from his initiative to set up the Advisory Planning Board. Planning was the talismanic concept to him to solve all economic and social problems. He was often angry with the Muslim League on the ground that his efforts for 'forward planning' which entailed planning for a unified India were being thwarted by the separatist policies of the latter.⁴³ But when the reactions of big business and their supporters against the Budget came out in the open we find that while Matthalai had no problem to defend his earlier stand and continue to support the Budget, Nehru succumbed. Actually, it was easier for Matthalai to stick to his decision. He would have supported the Budget because a genuinely capitalist state would require an efficient system where only legally permitted profit earnings could be allowed by the state. Allowing evasion of taxes would only make the state system inefficient and lead to distortion of economic growth through emergence of unscrupulous monopolies. Matthalai as a professional economist and champion of free private enterprise would not hesitate to bring the tax evaders to the book. The big business pressure group, on the other hand, had no reason to fear from Matthalai's stand simply because he did not wield any political power. Nehru was a different proposition. Here was a Caesar who wanted to take a stand. Nehru's support to the Budget would have made all the differences. But the state power which was coming up in the early days of the year 1947 was not

capable of standing above group interest and play the role of the referee for a free capitalist growth. The Caesar of the olden days was felled by his colleagues. The new Caesar, whom his colleagues failed, could remain a leader only through capitulation. Nehru did not want to identify himself with any particular socio-economic class. His attempt was to appear as the leader above class-strifes and class-interest. As a consequence, he had to wilt under the pressure from the only organized power group—big business in India.

The bourgeoisie in India, albeit unable to establish its class hegemony over the society because of its distorted growth under colonial aegis, could always influence the political process. This was possible because of the particular configuration of the power-groups giving leadership to the Indian peoples' struggle for freedom and the absence of any other strongly organized class-force. The role of the big bourgeoisie in India was to set limits to the power aspiration of the political leadership in the course of state formation in India. G D. Birla in his now famous letters to P. Thakurdas in 1936, had, in so many words, defined these limits.⁴⁴ All the efforts of Nehru to transgress these limits had resulted in failure and in his resultant surrender to the mainstream conformism dominant within the Congress leadership. The Budget episode discussed here illuminates these limits further by attempting another futile transgression.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

The Colonial State, the Repressive State Apparatus and the Civil Society

DAVID ARNOLD, *Police Power and Colonial Rule Madras 1859-1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, pp xii + 277, Rs 130.

February 1932. In Gudivada town of Krishna district, trained nationalist women volunteers¹ were peacefully picketing foreign cloth shops, when the colonial police swung into action. Reporting this *The Hindu* of 20 February 1932 noted.

The police splashed coloured water on the ladies². . . and the picketeers persisting were removed in a bus to Addada, a village at a distance and left there. They presented themselves again in front of the foreign cloth shops (on 19 February) . . . and started picketing. Coloured water was splashed on them after which they were taken in a bus to Komaravolu and left off there.

In one such instance, the women picketeers, due to the severity of the coloured water treatment given by the police, became unconscious and were admitted to the hospital. Within no time a huge crowd gathered to protest against police repression and surrounded the hospital. The police were said to have been surprised to see the spontaneous popular gathering and reaction³.

These incidents illustrate how closely the whole strategy of the national movement was built around the character and framework of the colonial state. In 1930-34, the nationalist strategy was to expose the coercive character of the colonial state and its repressive state apparatus, especially the police. This strategy kept the national liberation struggle alive in the popular consciousness during the non-movement phase. Such was the close link between the framework of the colonial state and the Indian national liberation struggle. Yet there are hardly any serious works on the nature of the colonial state⁴ and its 'ideological state apparatus' and 'repressive state apparatus' (the army, the police, the courts, the prisons, etc.), which 'function by violence'⁵. It is to bridge this gap in our historiography that David

Arnold has attempted a serious study of police power and colonial rule in the Madras Presidency during 1859–1947.

At the outset one must thank David Arnold for providing us with a well-documented and analytical work on the colonial origins of the Indian police. He defines the role of the police within the colonial system and examines the nature and the consequences of the interaction between the police and the people. Arnold's book is also an initiation into an area of our colonial past which so far has been neglected by the historians.

Locating himself within the terms of the broader debate over the nature and impact of colonial rule, Arnold analyses the specific character and importance of the police, for the 'police also serve as a metaphor for the colonial regime as a whole'. Arnold argues that in colonial India police power was often used to circumvent or supplement the legal process. As a result, the colonial police often usurped the 'role of judge, jailor and executioner'. He shows at a greater length how the growing popular opposition to colonial rule made the colonial rulers realize the need for prompt retribution and collective punishment. 'The more resolutely colonial control was challenged,' argued Arnold, 'the greater the willingness of the colonial authorities to authorise police action that went beyond both the letter and the spirit of the lawmakers and magistrates. Much of the impact of the police lay in their unlicensed petty tyranny, their corruption and brutality' (p. 3). The other important aspect of the colonial police, was its defence of the British interests as well as the interests of the Indian propertied classes. This trend, argues Arnold, continued uninterrupted in the post-independence era. Naturally the colonial police was passed largely unchanged into Indian hands after 1947 and has become a 'mainstay of post-colonial state power'. This fairly sums up Arnold's thesis on the Madras constabulary in colonial India.

There are however certain contradictions in and problems with Arnold's arguments. In chapter one, 'Origins and Structure', he shows how colonialism, from the businessman's viewpoint, established 'a framework of control, a pattern of order otherwise absent from non-European and uncolonized parts of the world. The colonial state had to be something more than an agency for the collection of land revenue: it was required to provide a general environment of 'law and order' (pp. 12–13, emphasis added). By the 1850s, Munro's *ryotwari* system had actually increased the need for the State to assume direct responsibility for rural policing (p. 16). In creating the new police there 'had been a significant departure from pre-colonial institutions and practice and in favour of a Western model of organization' (p. 35, emphasis added). Yet the colonial system of police has become famous for its petty tyranny, corruption and brutality. In locating the reasons for these drawbacks, Arnold writes that, 'Here perhaps pre-colonial traditions ran strong; but the British, by the very nature of the police

institution they created, sanctioned their continuance' (p 3, emphasis added).

Let us recapitulate the basic argument. The Western model of police organization by itself was superior and rational. But it harboured in practice unlicensed petty tyranny, corruption and brutality, because pre-colonial traditions ran strong in it, whose continuance was sanctioned by the British. This argument, we must point out, smacks of the Imperial rulers' perception of pre-colonial Indian society and culture. However radical a historian may sound or proclaim himself to be a partner in the 'collective 'subaltern' odyssey' (p VIII), he is bound to reproduce and perpetuate the myths and stereotypes developed by the colonial rulers unless he consciously moves away from the racial bias that went into the 'official discourse'.⁶ To achieve this objectivity, we must, to start with, analyse how colonial control transformed the 'structures of the life-world',⁷ i.e., the nature of the snapping off of the links between the traditional systems and the 'life-world'. This process is always mediated by an ideological 'discourse.' Unless one conceptualises the process of the structuring of the subjective perceptions that went into the colonial ruler's theory of the traditional 'life-world', we cannot identify and disassociate ourselves from their particular ideological 'discourse' that was central to the official documents.

Another problem which surfaces, especially in the second chapter, is Arnold's concept of 'subaltern'. The preaching from Ranajit Guha's and Arnold's personal journey in the 'collective "subaltern" odyssey' certainly left a mark on this otherwise very valuable work. Because Arnold, in a rather naive way, tries to equate the 'subaltern' constabulary with the 'subaltern' social classes. We shall not go into the theoretical and analytical problems involved in such an enterprise, for we have dealt with it elsewhere.⁸

In his enthusiasm to draw a picture of a less coercive colonial state, Arnold writes in the end that despite 'the accusing cries of "Police Raj" that issued periodically from its political opponents, India's colonial regime fell short of being a police state in the conventional sense . . . British rule in India did not rest upon the single point of coercive state power. It was not a police state to be ranked alongside Nazi Germany or Stalin's Russia' (p 230). One need not comment upon the apparent political and ideological radicalism implicit in the equation of Nazi Germany with Stalin's Russia. It is an age old strategy to invoke the so-called ghosts in far-off lands to circulate the actual monster nearer to us as a liberal human ghost.

Despite all these problems we must welcome Arnold's book as a timely intervention in our dominant traditional historiography. Especially his chapters on 'Policing of Rural Madras', 'Policing the Proletariat,' and 'Police, Public and Politicians' are very well worked out, throwing light on the relationship between the police and oppressed social groups, the police and the Indian propertied classes,

and finally, the police and the bourgeois nationalist leadership. We are with Arnold, when he observes that 'at a time when the Congress ministry was deeply involved in the developing struggle with communism, ministers were only interested in strengthening and expanding the existing police apparatus. .' (p. 216). In the Madras Presidency, the way C Rajagopalachari defended and used the colonial police brought sharp criticism from the Congress ranks. E M S Namboodripad, the then Organizing Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and the future Marxist leader, protested in October 1937 that 'genuine Congressmen would feel sorry that the representatives of the Congress who were hitherto speaking the language of independence and struggle have begun to speak the language of 'law and order' of the old regime' (quoted in p 218). The transition from colonialism to bourgeois rule had its own inevitable compromises and legacies.

ATLURY MURALI

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SAFDAR HASHMI MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

8, Vithal Bhai Patel House, Rafi Marg, New Delhi 110 001

The Safdar Hashmi Memorial Committee has decided on several short-term and long-term projects, including two which Safdar had himself wanted to start in the near future. The first of these is the organising of a 'Jan Utsav' as a counter to the Government-sponsored 'Apna Utsav' with its mythification of culture and propagation of decadent values. The Committee has decided to organise the first Jan Utsav in Delhi in about a year's time from now. The second is the setting up of a cultural complex-cum-training centre for theatre, video and related fields which would aim at discovering and developing artistic talent among those sections of our society who do not normally get the opportunity for developing their talents. The centre would involve professionals from different fields of art for this purpose and work towards strengthening the bonds between artists and the people. The Committee has also decided to constitute vigilance committees at different places to safeguard freedom of expression.

The most immediate plan chalked out by the Committee is to observe Safdar's birthday (12 April) by organising a cultural festival, beginning on 12 April and concluding on Sunday, 16 April. April 12 will also be observed as National Street Theatre Day. The cultural festival will include the following: (i) A one-day festival of street theatre, (ii) a seminar on street theatre, (iii) a music concert, (iv) a dance recital, (v) a full length play, (vi) an exhibition and auction of works of art, (vii) *mushaira* and *kavisammelan*, (ix) a video film on Safdar's life.

In order to increase the mobility of the Jan Natya Manch, the street theatre group of which Safdar was the convenor, the Committee has decided to raise resources to acquire a suitable vehicle and convert it into a mobile theatre.

A large mobilisation of resources and funds would be required so that the Committee may be able to carry out its plans. As part of this resource mobilisation, the Committee has decided to bring out a souvenir on the occasion of the cultural festival, which would include a selection of Safdar's writings, excerpts and photographs of Janam plays and of the national protest that followed his death. The souvenir will be released on Safdar's birthday. Funds will also be raised through the cultural festival.

Finally, the Committee decided to constitute a Trust to implement its decisions. It elected from among its own members the following trustees: Bhisham Sahni, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, E. Alkazi, G. P. Deshpande, Habib Tanveer, M. K. Raina, Utpal Dutt, Vivan Sundaram, Moloyashree Hashmi, Sohail Hashmi. It was also decided to constitute a committee of patrons consisting of eminent persons from all walks of life. Eminent painter M. F. Husain has already agreed to become one of the patrons.

We appeal to all those who feel the need to protect and advance the democratic and secular values for which Safdar Hashmi lived and died, to contribute generously towards the work of the Memorial Committee. We make a special appeal to the press to help us by publicising our plans and the appeal for contributions as widely as possible. All contributions should be sent to the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, 8 Vithal Bhai Patel House, Rafi Marg, New Delhi 110 001.

SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Changing Perceptions and Radicalisation of the National
Movement in Andhra 1922–34 **Atlury Murali** 3

Variations in Perception of the Insurgent Peasants of
Bengal in the Late 18th Century **Atis Dasgupta** 30

Note Beyond the Altekarian Paradigm: Towards a New
Understanding of Gender Relations in Early Indian
History **Uma Chakravarti** 44

Note Negotiating Totalities: Towards an Analysis of
Popular Magazine Fiction **Seemanthini Niranjana** 53

Book Review 60

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1 A Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977

2 See R Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', *Journal of Comparative Economics*, December 1979, pp 325-45

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Editorial Note

Much of the current number of *Social Scientist* is taken up by articles which discuss historical phenomena, making use of literature as source material. The lead article by Atlury Murali takes a close look at a number of Telugu literary works of the twenties and the early thirties of this century as symptomatising the changing perceptions and radicalisation of the National Movement in Andhra during the period. The growth of the National Movement in Andhra had reached a critical stage when the tremors of the distant Bolshevik Revolution reached its shores. In the aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement, nationalists had turned their attention to the burning social issues of the time, and to the need for striking roots among the peasantry by articulating its demands and aspirations. This provided an apposite context for the radicalising ideas of the Bolshevik Revolution to have their impact upon the perceptions of the intelligentsia. Three distinct trends of thought can be found reflected in the mirror of the literature of the period: a bourgeois nationalist trend, a romantic trend, and a radical trend. It was under the pressure of the radical elements, in Andhra and elsewhere, that the Congress finally came to adopt *poorna swaraj* as its goal. A large section of the radical nationalists in Andhra turned towards Socialist and Communist ideas at a later date, in the thirties, after their disappointment over the outcome of the Gandhi-led struggle of 1930–31.

Atis Dasgupta's article on the perception of insurgent peasants in Bengal relates to a much earlier period, the late eighteenth century, but also bases itself on literary sources. His focus of attention is two peasant uprisings of the period: the protracted Fakir–Sannyasi uprising of 1761–1800, and the Rangpur uprising of 1783. Each of these had a near-contemporary Bengali verse written about it, *Majnu Shaher Hakikat* and *Rangpurer Jager Gan*, which Dasgupta analyses for throwing light on the consciousness of the insurgent peasants. Interesting differences emerge between the two cases: while the target of the Rangpur uprising was not the Company as such, which operated at several removes and even projected itself in a benign role, but upstart intermediaries who acted on its behalf, the Fakir–Sannyasi rebellion

considered the British as its prime target. The reasons for this difference, as well as for the fact that the Rangpur uprising was a brief outbreak while the Fakir-Sannyasi rebellion was a sustained, long drawn-out struggle, lay in the differing social compositions and outlooks of the combatants in the two cases. The perception of the Fakir-Sannyasi rebellion was informed by a sense of loyalty to the pre-British, traditional ruling class. This gave the rebellion a contradictory character: on the one hand, it was backward-looking; on the other hand, however, it was far more comprehensive and total in its challenge to British authority.

The note by Uma Chakravarty gives a brief but fascinating analysis of the discussion of the role of women in early Indian society which is to be found in nationalist historiography. In their eagerness to counter the influence of writers like James Mill who had not only denigrated Hindu civilisation but had dwelt specifically on the object role of women in Hindu society, authors in this tradition tended to glorify the role of women in early Indian society, and to attribute the subsequent fall in their status to a variety of later developments, including, in some cases, the onset of Muslim rule. Chakravarty who takes up Altekar's study for special analysis shows both how the idealisation of the role of women in the Vedic age had little concern for historical verisimilitude, as well as how the ideal picture itself was the product of a peculiarly flawed perception. And finally, we publish a note by Seemanthini Niranjana which analyses popular magazine fiction and draws attention to its role in 'fixing the parameters of popular discourse within which social issues are raised and resolved'.

ATLURY MURALI*

Changing Perceptions and Radicalisation of the National Movement in Andhra, 1922-34

The period between the Non-Cooperation Movement and Salt Satyagraha witnessed a marked change in social and political perceptions which, in turn, influenced the national movement in Andhra. In this paper we attempt to analyse how far the shaping of the new perceptions influenced the national consciousness. A striking feature of this period was the spread of new social and political ideas rooted in the communist ideology. No sphere of life was left untouched by these new ideas. At one level we see the spread of new ideas regarding man-woman relationship, problems of women, peasantry and untouchables. At another level different ideological positions in relation to the national liberation struggle were discussed and propagated. Two contradictory visions of the future transformation of society—one rooted in the bourgeois ideology and the other in the left ideology—started competing for both ideological and political hegemony over the national movement.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, it was generally assumed that the social reform movements in Andhra, initiated by Kandukuri Veeresalingam and his fellow reformers, had come to an end.¹ This assumption is, however, only partially true, for social reform in Andhra acquired a wider dimension and new orientation from the 1920s. Much broader and crucial socio-cultural questions were debated and discussed in a bid to create a new atmosphere conducive to bourgeois social development.

As part of social reform one of the major social questions addressed by the nationalist intellectuals was the problem of untouchability which generated significant conflict in agrarian society. To start with, the old myths and popular perceptions—the ideological basis of untouchability—had to be changed. Simultaneously, new perceptions had to be popularised. But the type of perceptions propagated during this period, especially by the Gandhian nationalists, were such that they had a dual character. This duality was in fact apparent in the Gandhian 'consensus' model of reform. The aim of Gandhi in taking up

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the problem of untouchability was 'internal reform and self-purification from the very bottom'. At a moral level for Gandhi, 'to remove the curse of untouchability is to do penance for the sin committed by the Hindus of degrading a fifth of their own religionists.' At the political level the unity between the followers of different religions and castes would prevent Great Britain from 'pursuing the immoral policy of Divide and Rule'.² Throughout 1922-34 the Gandhian nationalists' efforts were aimed at educating public opinion by taking up some issues like opening of schools, roads, wells and Hindu temples for 'Harijans'.

In Andhra the nationalist press was very active in attacking the evil practice of untouchability. Several articles were written to change the thinking of the upper castes and to mould public opinion in favour of removing untouchability.³ Songs, pamphlets, novels and short stories were written in Telugu to propagate new perceptions against untouchability.⁴ The dominant theme in all these writings was that the 'Harijans' should undertake internal reform, or what they generally called 'self-purification'. Simultaneously the upper castes should realise their social responsibilities, and extend their help in carrying on the internal reform by the 'Harijans'. Towards this end certain degrading cultural and social practices were sought to be changed. Temple entry, education, opening of wells, roads, etc., were the main aspects emphasised by the nationalists both in their propaganda and in the actual struggle, i.e., the Civil Disobedience Movement. In other words, the nationalists in Andhra closely followed Gandhi and evolved and propagated a model of changing the social degradation of the 'Harijans', sustained by their economically subordinate position. But the Gandhians only touched the cultural aspect and conveniently negated the derivation of the problem, i.e., their relation to the land.

Of all the writings, Unnava Lakshminarayana's Telugu novel, *Malapalli* (*Sanga Vijayam*), was the best example of contemporary Gandhian intellectuals' effort to solve the problem of untouchability. This was the first novel in Telugu where a prominent social reformer and nationalist leader tried to come to grips with untouchability, not simply as a moral question but as a political and social problem integral to rural life in Andhra.⁵ We have taken up this novel as an example also because 'Unnava's *Malapalli* was a small visual display of contemporary Andhra'.⁶

Unnava introduces the problems of *Panchamas*—or Malas and Madigas (their caste names)—as linked to land relations in Andhra villages. The main story centres around the basic social contradiction between the landless agricultural labourers, i.e., Malas and Madigas, and the landlords of Kamma caste.⁷ The first part of the novel brings out the main social contradiction in village life. The big landlord, Chowdary, along with other village landlords, decides to pay wages in cash, not in kind (paddy), as it used to be till then. But the real

problem is the reduction of coolie rates to four annas (25 paise) for a day, whereas the real conversion of the wages in kind into cash would come to one rupee on the basis of existing commodity rates. The coolies show readiness to accept cash wage rates, provided they are paid on the basis of existing rates, i.e., one rupee per day. The justification for the coolies' demand is provided by Sangadasu (younger son of Ramadasu of 'Mala Dasari' caste, whose members preach religion among *Panchamas*), who works in the house of landlord Chowdary, believes in the philosophy of non-violence and is ready to sacrifice everything to practise his views. He says: 'Labour is coolies' property and land is ryots' property. When he is getting higher rates for his commodities, should there not be a corresponding increase of price for coolies' commodity, i.e., labour?'⁸ Ramanayudu, the son of landlord Chowdary (educated and a model of a typical Gandhian liberal nationalist landlord), also tries to help Sangadasu, by intervening on his behalf. This enrages the landlord.

Meanwhile, Ramanayudu and Sangadasu go to attend a political meeting at Vijayawada. The author shows the urban links of the rural movements and also the spread of new political perceptions and ideologies among peasants living in the villages. Here the author explains his notion or theory of solving the untouchables' problems, by using the Gandhian non-violent 'consensus' philosophy. Interestingly, through the presidential speech the author takes a closer look at different ideological currents dominant in the world, with an eye to choose a path suitable to the specific Indian situation.⁹ This also explains the awareness of different contemporary political ideologies among the nationalist intelligentsia in Andhra in the 1920s and their firm commitment to foster the ideas conducive for bourgeois social development.

He starts by denouncing the French and American experiments, for they resulted in the establishment of a government dominated by capitalist interests which further oppressed the lower classes. For him the Italian experiment (Antonio Gramsci's factory council experiment)¹⁰ was also a failure, because even though initially the workers occupied the factories of the capitalists, finally, both the classes compromised. Then he takes up the example of Russia, where, according to him, the Peoples' Soviet Government was established. Interestingly he devotes half the space in this section to discuss how the feudalism of the Tsarist regime, which oppressed the poor peasants, was smashed by the Bolsheviks, how the majority of the peasants were given control over the land under collectivised farming and so on. He sums up the main ideological principles of Lenin and Trotsky and the spirit of the Soviet experiment as¹¹

All have got equal right to enjoy the material resources of the nature; all should work and enjoy the fruits of their labour, when some were starving and suffering without food and clothes, others

were living in pomp and show, with all the vices—this was not justified. These are their main ideological principles

Even though he concedes that the Bolshevik ideas are dominating the world, creating a scare among the capitalists in countries like Great Britain, France and America, the author sees great hope for India in England's efforts to meet the Russian ideological threat by reforming their age-old political system through liberalisation—voting right to woman, more rights to workers and so on—and by taking up welfare measures in favour of the poor (housing, etc.) and also avoiding crisis by affecting compromises between capital and labour. He says ¹²

We should not resort to revolutionary methods. The best way is to follow the footsteps of the systems established in England. If all the landlords are asked to distribute their land for all, would they accept? Even asking that is not just on our part. When we think about their welfare, they should also, following what is just, accept to give proper share in the crop to the coolies and give fertile lands, in *porambokes* (waste lands) and forests, to the depressed classes. The responsibility of developing our education is with rich people. . . . Demanding half the share, in running the government, for coolies is not an excess demand. Our movement is a sacred one. There is no place for hatred in it. Any movement with hatred will not sustain (or survive).

In this statement, the author has actually expressed the ideological position of contemporary nationalist intellectuals like him, who were in favour of change in the social relations of production at such a level that it would help them to take the society on to the path of bourgeois social development on the model of English society.

Coming back to the main story, Ramanayudu and Sangadasu come back to the village, after the Vijayawada political meetings. The coolies encouraged by Venkatadasu—elder son of Ramadasu, who is of a revolutionary nature and advocates direct radical action—decide to go on strike to press for their demand for a proper wage. They refuse to cut the paddy crop in the landlord's (Chowdary) lands. Sangadasu leads the strike. Infuriated by the strike, the landlord, Chowdary, beats Sangadasu on the head and kills him. He then goes into hiding and the murder is covered up, through bribes, by the village Panchayat President and some other landholders in the village. To make Sangadasu immortal and remind the people of his ideals, the *Panchamas*, helped by Ramanayudu, establishes a *Sanga Pitham* to impart education to the 'Harijans'. Thus ends the first part of the novel.

In the remaining three parts of the novel, the author shows the echoes of Sangadasu's ideals in the lives of villagers. The conflict between the landlords and the agricultural labourers ignited by

Sangadasu continues till the death of the landlord, Chowdary. After the landlord's death, the survivors in his family are shown actively helping the untouchables to reform and uplift themselves. Therefore, the social conflict is resolved in a non-violent way, because the landlords realise their social responsibility towards the untouchables in the village and consciously involve themselves in the work of uplifting them. Simultaneously, the *Panchama* leaders also realise the need for radical social reform from within. They devote their energies in developing education among the *Panchamas* and changing their social habits which are generally considered unclean by the high caste Hindus. The fusion of this new awareness among the untouchables and high caste Hindus resulting in a slow change in the old social relations is shown in the end.

The most interesting part is the moulding of Venkatadasu's character, into that of a *Takkella Jaggadu*, a social bandit who robs the rich to help the poor, in a bid to justify the author's method of uplifting the untouchables through 'consensus' between the landlords and labourers and by social reform from within, in a non-violent way. In the first part of the novel it is shown that Venkatadasu represents the stream of radical views in solving the problems of *Panchamas*. It was he who advocated direct confrontation with the landlords. Yet this character later turns into a bandit. The implication is that the radical ideas, which might lead to direct confrontation between the landlords and labourers due to the class question involved, would ultimately end up as social banditry, and are not capable of creating or developing into an alternative paradigm of solving the social contradictions. The only path proper to follow was the Gandhian model of change through 'consensus' and also through internal cultural reform. Ramanayudu, therefore, becomes a model liberal landlord, who is sympathetic towards the problem of the untouchables and ultimately sacrifices his property for the social cause, thus sustaining the 'consensus' model of Gandhi.

At another level this novel also shows an awareness of 'Bolshevik ideas' and how those new socialist ideas became synonymous with the real aspirations of the *Panchamas*.¹³ Thus, during 1922-34, the *Panchamas'* quest for spiritual freedom, social justice and betterment of their material conditions, also becomes part of their national consciousness. Once moved towards the path of social upliftment the 'Harijans' on their part brought with them the material problems rooted in land. Consequently, when the nationalists needed 'Harijans' political support they projected the notion that by joining the 'just political war' of Gandhi in 1930, they would be actually putting an end to their social degradation and poverty. To illustrate our point we quote here one popular poem of Gurram Jashava Kavi.¹⁴

Even though the blood is dead in you,
Adi Andhra (Harijan), Think for a while,

Do you have cloth to wear? Food to eat?
Wasn't your hut graced by *Peddamma*? (Goddess of misfortune)
Why can't you stand with Gandhu,
Who is showing pity on your conditions,
And worrying by shedding his tears,
In the just war!

After the Non-Cooperation Movement the nationalist intelligentsia seems to have realised that the path towards national liberation was not just through a straight political battle. The basic social and cultural impediments, in preparing and taking the society towards the final goal, *Poorna Swaraj*, had to be cleared simultaneously. The liberation from the hegemony of colonial ideology and culture and the backward looking traditional indigenous cultural customs and ideas, would have to be achieved to create the new social atmosphere and cultural outlook conducive for the thriving of new political, social and economic ideas and goals that would accompany the Indian *Swaraj*. Therefore, apart from the major social evils like untouchability, they also devoted their attention towards the problems of women and peasants

A major attack was unleashed on dowry, selling of brides (*Kanyasulkam*), child marriages, problems of child widows and widow remarriages, women's education, freedom for women to participate in public life and so on. Even deeper social problems, like the conflict that emerged in man-woman relationship due to the efforts of woman to break the four walls of private life and enter into public life, were discussed by the intelligentsia

Several articles, short stories and poems were written to educate the public on the evil practice of child marriage and the miserable life which the innocent child widows were subjected to.¹⁵ One poet, T. Narayana Sastri, translated the piteous social condition of the child widows into poetry, to rouse the humanitarian instinct in the hearts of the people. A good example was his poem called *Padma*, which was based on the real life story of a child widow, *Padma*, who died just before the publication of the poem.¹⁶

They married her off at a tender age
Her husband embraced death the same day,
When her friends said, 'Widow *Padma*',
She couldn't understand what it means.

Bringing down the essence of Universal Beauty,
The God has created *Padma*, But to create
One suitable husband for *Padma*, as if fearing
The annihilation of the world, he kept quiet

Is *Padma* a widow? If so what is it for *Padma*?

There is no end for her mischance
 Unless it is a weakness in God Brahma's creation
 Why would he produce this misfortunated beauty;
 Aha! What a wonder! 'In beauty
 Padma is unsurpassed and in that a widow'.

In fact, by 1927 the women nationalists started actively propagating for the abolition of child marriage through legislation. For instance, Mrs A Bhaskaramma wrote an impressive article, in December 1927, advocating radical change in the mental outlook of the people towards the practice of child marriage. She narrated in detail how child marriages were an assault on girls of a tender age and against the rhythm of natural life and its pleasures. She called on the women's associations in Andhra to take up the issue of child marriages immediately and mobilise public opinion against it. She proposed 16 years for girls and 20 years for boys as minimum age for marriage and asked for government legislation to that effect. She criticized as inadequate the 14 years minimum age for girls' marriage as was proposed in the Madras Legislative Council at that time.¹⁷ Even caste journals like the *Padmasali Patrika* and the *Vasavi* were in the forefront in denouncing the evil practice of child marriages and strongly advocating marriage after puberty.¹⁸ Once the Sarada Bill was passed in September 1929 the nationalist press and most of the reform oriented caste journals published the contents of the bill prominently and requested the readers to spread the message among the illiterate people in the villages.¹⁹

Among other social problems the question of widow-remarriage was given serious attention in the press with a view to develop a powerful movement in favour of widow-remarriage. For instance, in a Telugu monthly, the *Andhrabhyudayamu*, Vol. I, No. 1, March 1924, an impressive article was written by Mrs Tarala Baladevi advocating widow remarriage. Another Telugu monthly, the *Andhra Lakshmi*, published several articles during 1922-24 under the column '*Sarada Leekhalu*' (Letters of Sarada), to modernise people's outlook and spread new perception in favour of widow remarriage in Andhra. Stories based on the miserable plight of widows were published to rouse sympathy in favour of widow remarriage movement. A good illustration was an actual story published in *Sri Sadhana* in 1929. 'The story of a lady who was convicted (with transportation for life) was that she was married at the age of three years and became a widow at the age of seven. In later years due to illicit contact [sic] she became pregnant. When a son was born to her, she tried to bury the child alive at a place where animals were grazing. The boys who were taking care of the animals noticed this and reported the matter to the village elders. The issue went to the court and she was sentenced to transportation for life.' In its editorial the paper commented that the evil customs of society transformed the mother, who should have been

the embodiment of love, into a devil and made her the murderer of her own child. The paper appealed to the people to open their eyes and allow widows to remarry.²⁰ This type of stories and articles created a social atmosphere conducive to widow remarriage in Andhra.

Even though the movement for widow remarriage was active from the mid-nineteenth century, it took a new lease of life after Veeresalingam, in the hands of reformers like Darisi Chenchiah, once a Gadar Party member and now (1920-35) an active social reformer in Andhra.²¹ Initially he started his work among his own Vaisya caste group 1925²² and later extended his social reform activities to other caste groups like Kammas²³ and Vishva Brahmins.²⁴ Several Vaisya caste conferences were held under his chairmanship in taluqs and towns like Rajahmundry, Vetapalem, Bandaru, Eluru, Cocanda, Vizagapatam, Vizianagaram and Guntur to further the social reform movement.²⁵ The main emphasis was on marriage after puberty, widow marriage and women's education. Darisi Chenchiah himself, with the help of the youth, conducted several widow marriages.²⁶ In this social crusade the *Vedas* and other ancient sacred literary works were used extensively to show that conducting of marriages after puberty was the only way sanctioned by the Hindu canon.²⁷ He also used several ideas from Russian books to attack the socially backward outlook,²⁸ and indeed succeeded in creating a powerful social reform movement in Andhra.

As a result of this social crusade a new social awareness was brought into the people's perception. A suitable cultural environment, conducive to rational change, was created. This enabled the women to participate, even though in a limited way, in public life. Due to this new social awareness, several women's associations came out openly in favour of social reform activities.²⁹ For instance, disregarding the orthodox Hindu opposition, the Bazwada Women's Conference passed resolutions accepting the Sarada Bill and also resolved to mould public opinion in favour of the bill.³⁰

Women's upliftment during this period was done not just by social reforms but also through the encouragement of female education. The 'low status of womanhood' was perceived as the central problem in society and the family and by imparting education the intelligentsia aimed at raising the status of women. Consistent propaganda in favour of female education was carried on by contemporary Telugu newspapers and journals. The *Satyagrahi* wrote on 16 April 1928 'As long as women who are Mother Goddesses are not free and are steeped in ignorance, the nation cannot progress. When Mother Deity is in a mean position, her son cannot become a Great Soul. When the mother is not free, her son cannot be free.'

But the type of education which was prescribed and popularized shows the dual attitude of the intelligentsia towards this crucial aspect of women's liberation. In almost all the schools and 'ashramas' established for girls, they were imparted only traditional education

and not the professional courses and modern science which were emphasized in boys' education. The subjects generally taught to girls were Telugu, Sanskrit and Hindi, language, history, world history, home science, drawing, embroidery, weaving of banians, etc., border work on cloth and spinning, cooking, mathematics, the Ramayana, Mahabharata, the Bhagavatam and other traditional texts and the life histories of traditional women personalities like 'Sati Savitri', Sita, Anasuya, etc.³¹ The main emphasis was invariably on the daily reading of sacred religious texts, Telugu language and the stories of the great traditional women personalities. Men had, in fact, a dual attitude towards the liberation of women. They wanted to 'liberate' women but not let them be totally liberated from the oppressive traditional culture and patriarchal ideology and the subordinate position assigned to them in society and family. This attitude influenced the type of female education propagated by the intelligentsia during this period. This 'dualism' in men's attitude towards women's role in society and family is characterised by K N Panikkar as 'public veneration and private humiliation'.³²

The intelligentsia were ready to liberate women from evil practices like child marriage and dowry and strongly advocated widow marriages and traditional education which helped to mould them to perform their twin social roles. Since the socialization was done through women in the enclosed joint family, imparting of education and liberating them from some evil social practices became necessary so that they could accomplish the new task of moulding the new political (nationalist) personality of young boys. The women should also participate in the national liberation movement though the political role assigned was a rather passive one. But they should also be confined to the traditional role set for them in society and domestic life. This was elaborated by the *Satyagrahi* on 16 April 1928 which we have quoted earlier.

Therefore, the woman, 'Mother Deity', should be liberated and educated to the extent that she moulds her son as a great patriotic soul and yet confines herself within the contours of oppressive patriarchal culture, and basically performs the traditional domestic role in a subordinate position. This dualism was central to the bourgeois nationalist ideological discourse.

This dual attitude of the intelligentsia³³ towards women's liberation had such a powerful impact on the contemporary nationalist women's consciousness,³⁴ that throughout the 1920s even the most prominent women's journals like the *Andhra Lakshmi* and *Gruha Lakshmi* strongly advocated that women keep to the traditional role in domestic life along with a passive indirect political role.

Thus, the traditional subordinate domestic and social role played by women was reinforced with an added patriotic role. This was done by popularizing these perceptions in the most powerful language. Let us

quote an extract from an article 'Pati Bhakti' written by Smt. Yerneni Sheshamma in 1922³⁵

Pati bhakti (devotion to husband) is the only *dharma* for women. For wives, serving the husband is the only main path to attain this and other worldly pleasures or comforts. In this world *bhakti* is shining with innumerable shapes and countless faces and in infinite ways. The *Bhakti Devata* (Goddess of Devotion) is shining with the glow of wonderful shape—*Daiva Bhakti* (devotion to God), *Desa Bhakti*, *Matru Bhakti*, *Pita Bhakti* (devotion to father), *Pati Bhakti*, *Raja Bhakti* (devotion to king), etc,—and purifying the human society. A patriot (*Desa Bhaktudu*) is becoming a fortunate man by offering all his honour, riches and life, with love, to *Desa Mata* (Motherland). A woman who got *Pati Bhakti* shall be waiting to be engrossed in the fire of her husband's love, by knowing that her pleasures and riches are entwined with her husband's pleasures and riches and by grasping that her salvation lies only in *Pati Bhakti*. Our 'Puranas' and 'Itihasas' are glowing filled with *Paativratyamu* (matrimonial fidelity).

Thus the universal *bhakti* had comprised *Pati Bhakti* which justified the traditional subjugation of women to men in daily life and *Desa Bhakti* i.e., spinning, 'khaddar' etc³⁶

Despite its dualism and limitations the bourgeois nationalist perspective had a positive effect upon the women's quest to come out of seclusion which was part of the process of evolution of new consciousness. The symptoms of a wider change in women's consciousness one could see right from the 1920s. Speaking at the Godavari Ladies' Conference, at Palivala on 26 May 1925, Goteti Manikyamba, a prominent nationalist woman worker, said that³⁷

The orthodox were becoming still more conservative. Women were not having a place in social and political affairs. They, the women, had greater opportunities in imparting national education to children. *It is regrettable that women had no political and social rights equally with men* (emphasis added)

In the above speech she was actually voicing the emerging discontent among women and a desire for equal socio-political rights in society. This new radical consciousness slowly started crystallizing in women's consciousness, the reflection of which we can see in their writings by the late 1920s³⁸ and early 1930s. In 1932, Smt. Leela Nagabhushamma wrote in her article that³⁹

. In no respect were women inferior to men in intelligence and bravery. Only when men were ready to give us, women, who were born equal with men in God's creation, education and knowledge

and equal places in public positions, then this society and the nation would reach to the highest stage of development. Until then this nation would not command any honour, etc. This is three times certain

This type of new radical women's consciousness had a direct bearing on the national liberation struggle in Andhra during 1930-34. The change in the social and political perceptions that emerged during 1922-30 directly contributed to the radicalization of the national liberation struggle in the 1930s. The nationalist intelligentsia, especially the younger elements, were active not only in strengthening the universal character of nationalism and 'freedom' but also showed keen interest in the new radical political ideas that started sweeping the Indian subcontinent after the 1917 October revolution in Russia. This period, in fact, was a period of the development of varied intellectual positions regarding questions of strategy of the national liberation struggle and the path that should be followed for future social transformation of Indian society.

The universal character of nationalism and how the 'nation' was meant to serve the interests of all the 'people' was popularized by young nationalists in their popular songs. A good example is a poem, *Naa Janma Bhumi* ('My Mother Land'), written for children, by Tapi Dharma Rao, in 1924.⁴⁰

- (1) Nourishing from the time of birth,
Serving food to remove hunger,
Giving cloths to wear according to the need,
And education, etc, given (us) good honour,
The mother, who brought me up, is my motherland
- (2) A place where saints give all education,
A land where Buddha and Krishna preaches,
A locality which taught all the worlds,
This, my motherland, is my school.
- (3) Telling us not to beg others,
Telling us to retain our honour,
Telling us, sons! don't lose unity,
Mother who tells me so, is my motherland
- (4) The mother! The whole strength of this body,
And money, was it not given by you?
Your worship is my dharma, in this world,
Believe me, my motherland, I shall serve you

Another interesting example is the poem, *Vasanta Ganam* (Song of Spring), written by Turaga Venkataramaiah, assuming that the independent India of the future would nurture universal love and freedom. And in *Bhavya Bharati* (Future India), the poet asked the 'Kokila', the nightingale, to 'sing freely and without fear' ⁴¹. The same poet, a few years later wrote *Janmabhumi* (Motherland), where he depicted the agony of an individual who was alienated from his motherland and the frustration that follows if one was uprooted from his cultural moorings or society ⁴².

The concept of the universality of 'freedom' acquired somewhat sharp features by 1929. The *Satyagrahi* wrote in 1929 ⁴³

Indian! Wake up! The bird which flies in the air has complete freedom. The creatures which crawl on the earth have complete freedom. Those which move in the waters also have complete freedom. You are a human being. How long will you live as a slave? O Indian! Wake up!

Some good parodies were also written exposing the myth of material development of the Indian people under colonialism when they were in a subordinate position. The poem, *Swecha* (freedom) was a good example written in the form of a dialogue between a *Taruni* (young lady) and a *Chiluka* (parrot) ⁴⁴.

<i>Taruni</i>	Cage with yellow gold bars Cage decorated with red gems I have made it for you, come my pet! Let me collect your charming words
<i>Chiluka.</i>	What is the use of gems decoration Taruni? What benefit even if it is a golden cage? Will that not be a jail all the time? I won't come! I will not come to join you, O Royal face!
<i>Taruni.</i>	I made creepers with malle, virajaji, sampenga, molla, banti, pogada, chemanti, and gulabi flowers ⁴⁵ And tied them to the cage bars, Come! My darling, Royal courtesan come!
<i>Chiluka.</i>	Countless beautiful flowers I see in the lands of wilderness! Won't I see them in gorges, in the hills, O Blooming girl! I will not come to join your freedomless cage.
<i>Taruni</i>	I have collected and kept grapes, mangoes, Jama (guava-fruit), Danamma (anar), jack-fruit, plantains, Khajjura (dates) Sugar, milk, white butter and cream Can't you come to enjoy (eat) them, you parrot!

- Chiluka.* Blooming simple girl! O damsel! Will not all the fruits
Born on earth are always at the disposal of a parrot?
If there is no freedom what is Milk for? Aren't there
cold waters?
- Taruni.* O young parrot! you won't come to join when invited
You talk always about freedom and freedom
Leaving the matchless comforts when you are
Suffering and straining in the forests, how do (you) get
freedom?
- Chiluka* Ask like that O Lotus-eyed woman I shall tell you!
When gentle breezes are slowly blowing
Besides the green gorges under a mountain
Nearer to the pure hill streams or torrents
The freedom we get while flying from tree to tree
Joined by our fellow parrots, where is that freedom
here?
- Leaving the hills, trees, forests, and cities
When you are flying in the sky the joy you get
Will that be possible without freedom;
When I am roaming, as I like, through the sky
And see the whole World by visiting it,
Like a tightly packed bundle of clothes
You are imprisoned all the time,
Freedom is mine? Or yours? O girl like a young bud!
Is there anything equal to such freedom
Listen! For living beings freedom is life!

Perceptions on love and man-woman relationship had undergone an interesting metamorphosis. Telugu journals and newspapers published poems and short stories⁴⁶ which anatomised the roots of love embodied in nature and human relationship. By emphasising the simple, equal, harmonic and non-exploitative relationship between men and women they gave rise to a new ethos with their strong roots in universalism. The young radical nationalist intelligentsia's urge to foster a new ethos in nationalist culture and people's consciousness made them borrow old as well as create new simple literary forms to reach out to wider sections of society. As we shall be showing in the following pages, it was due to the initial influence of the new ethos that the young nationalist writers later became open to radical political ideas. This new spirit was best reflected in Basavaraju Apparao's poetry and took the shape of a popular trend in Nanduri Venkata Subbarao's *Yenki Patalu* (Songs on Yenki). The sway of radical political ideas ultimately produced the poetry of 'protest', 'hunger' and 'misery' culminating in the poetry of Srirangam Srinivasa Rao, best known as 'Sri Sri'.

These writers were, however, not distanced or separated from the nationalist struggle, rather they were the heart and soul of the then popular social and political movements, including the nationalist movement. Basavaraju Apparao who wrote *Selayeru* (Wild Stream) in 1916 and *Samudram* (Sea) in 1924⁴⁷ also wrote several poems popularising Harijan movement, nationalist politics and Gandhi. The best examples were his poems 'Maa Gandhi (Our Gandhi)', *Gandhi Prabha*, *Mala Madigala Mora* (Appeal of Untouchables), *Mattumandu* (Medicine of Sedation), *Ratnamu* (Charkha), *Jateeyapataakam* (National flag), 'Venunaadam' (on the non-cooperation movement), and *Swarajya Lakshmi Pendli* (Marriage of 'Swarajya Lakshmi', written during 1930-31).⁴⁸ Nanduri Venkata Subbarao, influenced by Basavaraju, wrote several poems, in which he expresses his longing for universal love and a simple and non-exploitative relationship with his imaginary love *Yenki*. Nanduri says in his poem *Kala*.⁴⁹

- (1) Millions of voices together
The way they sing a song,
In the middle of light and shade
I will stand and listen to it
- (2) In the glittering of a stream
In the tenderness of a garden
For the harmony of light and shade
I will search and rule.
- (3) If the world moves me anytime
Asking where is Yenki?
Towards light and shade
I will point my finger.

He brings out his vision of love and life much more clearly in the poem *Pantacheelake Payanam* ('Travel to the Paddy Fields')⁵⁰

- (1) On this side one cow and on that side one cow,
Between the two my Yenki,
Standing like an equal pair, my Yenki, won't
She play games if lived together my Yenki, it appears
As if my Yenki is saying 'look only at me'
- (2) On this side one stream and on that side one stream,
In the middle of the two streams my Yenki, holding
The milk pot on her head, my Yenki, in
The hand fumbling with flowers my Yenki, blowing
The flower trumpet my Yenki, would
Ask me 'Would you be like me', my Yenki.

- (3) On this side one hill and on that side one hill,
In the centre of the hillocks and glades my Yenki
Keeping the milk pot down my Yenki, when
Offering prayers in the temple my Yenki, I feel
Sorry for having only two eyes, my Yenki
- (4) On this corner one (paddy) field and in that corner one field
Between the two fields, my Yenki,
Giving flowers to me my Yenki; 'why any
Ornaments for us' says my Yenki, and
Thus creates pity in my heart, my Yenki

Interestingly several poets start projecting the natural 'poetry of manual labour'. The aim was to project new perceptions among the people regarding manual labour, especially the work on land, as natural and positive and thereby change the culturally structured derogatory attitude towards manual labour and the social classes which do manual work. They also projected the miseries of the labouring classes. For instance, in a poem, *Karshakudu Kavito* (Agriculturist with a Poet), the poet, Nadella Venkatarao, makes a dig at writers who glamourised the life of an agriculturist—'Living in the middle of green paddy fields and worshipping the Goddess of Nature how happily the agriculturist is living and how appreciable is that life!'—and narrated the harsher side of the life of labouring classes.⁵¹

In fact, the era of new poetry on love and man-woman relationships was started by Devulapalli Krishna Sastri. He rejected the traditional parameters imposed on literature and rebelled against society (traditional social relationships) which deprived the individual of his natural pleasures and peace in life. He joined the Sahiti Samiti (Guntur district) in 1920 and regularly contributed to a literary journal, the *Sahiti*, started in 1922, from Tenali.⁵² Influenced by the 'new poetry' popularised by Krishna Sastri, the younger poets established another association, Kavita Samiti, at Visakhapatnam in 1926, to take the new literary movement to a higher level. The most popular poems of Devulapalli were *Gandhi Ugam* (Gandhi Era), *Jateya Geetam* and *Krishna Paksham* (a collection of his poems on love, nature, etc., our). Starting from a romantic view of a harmonious relationship between a human being and the nature in *Krishna Paksham*.⁵³

Being a leaf in a leaf, flower in a flower,
Branch in a branch and becoming a smooth tender twig
Without hunger and thirst, grief and vexation,
Frenzied in this manner (mood) to roam in solitude
Shall I go through this forest path - or

Shall I stop here somehow (anyhow)?

The poet visualises the shattering of Indian slavery to alien rulers,

When cruel and crooked, false and severe
Chains of slavery scattered on their own, I
Raised my voice resounding the sky . . .

and dreams of a new world in the Gandhian era ⁵⁴

If lived with prosperity (it is) the Gandhi era
If man
Eats with satisfaction (it is) Gandhi world.
Concealed deadly poison in his throat
Showered Ganga water from his head
Man becoming 'Shiva' is the Gandhi era
If all follow 'Bapu' (that is) enough

With the emergence of Kavita Samiti in 1926,⁵⁵ the radical ideas (political and social) which were till then only in embryonic form, start maturing, as reflected in several poems written by poets associated directly or indirectly with this literary association. They break away from the problems of mere love and man-woman relationships and influenced by left-ideology start taking up wider social, political and ideological questions. A new literary journal, the *Prabhava*, took its birth during this period. The starting of the *Udayeni*, during 1933-34 by Kompella Janardhana Rao (1906-1937) and the *Jwala* in 1934, in fact, represented the maturation of the new radical trend in poetry. To illustrate our point let us see some of the poems written by Sri Sri.⁵⁶

The emergence of the radical perceptions and the challenge which they posed to the old world's social order was captured by Sri Sri in his poem *Avataaram* (Incarnation).⁵⁷

The metal bells of Yama's he-buffalo
Behind a cloud
Rang—*Khaneel*!
The hounds of the hell
Breaking the chains
Descended on running!
Morning Sun's seven horses
Getting foam
Went on running!
Goddess *Durga's* fiery lion,
yawned shaking its mane!
God *Indra's* ruddy elephant,
Challenged with a roar!

The bull of *Siva*
 Giving a roar
 Moved its dewlap and jumped!
 The primeval pig
 Doctor of the Vedic age
 Spread its tusk with a grunt!
 Mother Earth's
 Labour pains
 Brought to our mind, new creation!

Sri Sri was the first poet who transformed Marxist ideas into a simple and yet powerful poem, *Mahaprasthanam*⁵⁸ which influenced the minds of thousands of young nationalists and convinced the people of the necessity of a revolutionary transformation of the existing system

Another world,
 Another world,
 Another world called you!
 Go forward,
 Go pushing aside!
 Let us go on marching, up and up!
 Trotting together,
 Singing a song,
 With a thundering inner heart
 Haven't you heard
 The waterfall of another world?
 Throughout the path, offering blood
 From your heart, go forward!
 Walking the paths,
 Passing the cities,
 Cross over all the forests!
 Rivers flowing to East and West,
 Forests, hills and
 Deserts were they obstructions to us?
 Go forward,
 Go pushing aside!
 Let us go on marching up and up!
 With rotten bones,
 Ageing, old,
 O lazy fellows! Die!
 With burning blood,
 Full of strength,
 O soldiers! Come!
 Saying 'Haroom! Haroom Hara!
 Hara, Hara, Hara, Hara!

Haroom Hara' Move forward!
 Another world,
 A great world,
 Filled the whole Earth!
 Go forward!
 Go pushing aside!
 Roar like a *Prabhanjanam'*
 (Wind which breaks thoroughly)
 Spread at the speed of a thought!
 Rumbling like hail storms
 (roar of the final destruction of the world)
 Descent on breaking '*pela-pela, pela-pela*'!
 Go,
 Go,
 Go forward!
 Can't you see another world's
 Blazing fire of *tretagni'* (sacred fire)?
 Jumping, jumping, jumping and falling
 Fifty lakhs of pyramids (or cones or ridges)!
 Roaming, roaming, and roaming, the oceans
 Are performing the dance of deluge!
 Is it boiling oil? No, it is
 A lake (pond) of hot blood!
 Like '*Sivasamudram*'
 And Niagara (waterfall),
 Run! Run forward!
 Go forward!
 Go pushing aside!
 Another world's large metal kettle drum
 Was sounding without rest!
 Like cobras,
 Like wild dogs, and
 Like *Dhananjaya* (Arjun), start proceeding!
 Aren't they visible, the glitterings of
 Another world's crown of fire,
 The gleam of red flags,
 The fragrance of *homaṃwalalu* (holy fires)?

Thus during 1928-35 the younger elements of nationalist intelligentsia vigorously popularised new social and political perceptions among the people.⁵⁹ They created a strong social base for the left and radical ideas, especially among the youth. By popularising universal, rational and progressive ideas they laid the foundation for the hegemony of left ideology in Andhra.⁶⁰ Consequently, in the 1930s there emerged a bitter battle between the

left and bourgeois ideologies for cultural-ideological and political hegemony over the national liberation struggle

The spread of Marxist and socialist ideas in Andhra, during one-and-half decades after the 1917 October Revolution in Russia had created a nucleus of dedicated young socialists and Marxists within the womb of the nationalist movement. The popular character of the national liberation struggle gave the necessary initial warmth, nourishment and freedom for the maturation of leftist ideology within its womb. If one goes by the enormous amount of literature produced in Ar 'hra during the 1920s and 1930s, with all its diversity of ideas, then certainly it was a period of fermentation of ideas. Out of this fermentation three streams of ideas stood out clearly. One stream represented the bourgeois nationalist ideology. Second was the romanticism expressed mostly in new literature which we have shown above. The stream of left nationalist ideology was the third and the most important one.

Apart from regular articles, editorials, short stories, etc., in newspapers and journals, several books were published during this period by Vignana Chandrika Mandalī (established in 1906 it shifted to Bezvada in 1924), Andhra Grandha Mala, Manavaadarsha Grandha Mandalī, and others. A majority of the books were translations of Gandhian writings and speeches aimed at popularising his ideas on society and politics.⁶¹ Among the original writings Pingali Lakshminarayana's *Swasamrajya Vaibhavam*, written in 1927, is an interesting example. For this was the first work on political science written to suit Gandhian political ideas. In this book he addressed a major political question, i.e., what type of political system would India have to adopt after independence. He advocated the establishment of the bourgeois democratic system incorporating the main elements from American and European, especially British, models.⁶²

The emergence and consolidation of radical ideas and intellectuals within the Congress movement was more due to the influence of socialist and Marxist ideas spread through literature, be it articles, novels, books or poems. Keen interest was shown by Andhra nationalists in the Russian revolution and changes that followed revolution in Russian society. Gurajada Raghava Sarma's book, *Lenin Jeevitha Charitramu* ('Life History of Lenin') was perhaps the first detailed work in Telugu published in 1921.⁶³ Govindarajula Venkatakrishna Rao's biography of Lenin in English, published by Arch Publishing House, Madras, in 1921 was said to have sold more than 10,000 copies in India and abroad.⁶⁴ Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramaiah wrote a lengthy article, 'Soviyattulu' (Soviets), in the *Andhra Patrika* (1921), which was read by thousands of Telugu readers. This was the first article which introduced the positive changes that followed the October Revolution in Russia to the ordinary Telugu readers.⁶⁵ How powerful an impact it might have had on Telugu minds, who were in the middle of mass civil disobedience struggles as

part of the Non-Cooperation Movement all over Andhra, one can judge by reading just the last paragraph of the article⁶⁶

In Russia . . . a labourer is paid enough wages. One need not pay money for their train journeys. No postage charges for letters. To drink there is no toddy and arrack. Whenever sellings and buying are done through cooperatives then the seller is becoming a buyer and the buyer a seller. The middle traders, who only worshipped money and through money earned profits, were eliminated. To teach the philosophy of this system to the people special training, extending from six weeks to six months, was given. Through these methods the people were trained. There is no person without food. Nobody without education. No rich person. No poor person. No seller. No buyer. No lazy person. No person (overburdened) oppressed with work. No protecting soldier. No parasites to be protected. This type of great revolution, in several cases, might be incomplete and faulty. On some occasions it might also contain discontent. Anytime it might be a disappointing one. Yet, for us, who knows the *Yugadharms* (division of world into four ages as for Hindu mythology) on this Earth, this thriving new system (in Russia) or path is having the similar characteristics of *Krita Yuga* (stage - Golden Age) and there is no doubt in it.

In fact, the symbols of the Russian Revolution became so popular in journalistic language that the terms denoting these revolutionary symbols were used freely either to criticise or support any kind of radical act during the national movement. For instance, there was an editorial in the *Janmabhumi* attacking the militancy shown by the ryots in Pedanandipad (no-tax campaign) during 1921-22. The editorial was titled 'Red Flag'. This paper interestingly made a bitter attack on the Pedanandipad no-tax campaign, for it declared that the militant action was outside the scope of the then framework of the Gandhian Non-Cooperation Movement⁶⁷. But the 'Red Flag' evoked a different imagery for Sri Sri. In 1934 asking the people to march towards 'Another World' a socialist world, Sri Sri imagined it as a world emanating 'the gleam of red flags'⁶⁸.

Due to these changing social and political perceptions serious efforts were made by some nationalists to organize the peasants and labourers on class lines for their class demands. Some intellectuals with their peasant social background first made efforts to modernize the socio-cultural and political outlook of peasantry, so that they could be organized to fight for their class demands and simultaneously could be mobilised as a dominant force in the national liberation struggle.

In Andhra the first serious efforts were made by Dandu Narayana Raju and N G Ranga as early as 1923 to organize the peasantry in Kistna, Godavari and Guntur districts⁶⁹. Talking about the ideological

influences which motivated them to take up the peasant's demands N.G. Ranga later observed.⁷⁰

The Russian Revolution and the Indian movement for Swaraj inspired some of us who are the sons of peasant India, to develop the political movement of peasantry, artisans and rural masses who had been kept in a somnolent state by the traditional leaders of our society. So we began to organise the peasant unions from 1923 and Weavers' Unions from 1925.

In a bid to win over the peasants to an independent organization which would not be a part of the Congress and would yet retain links with the national liberation struggle, N.G. Ranga and others projected an interesting perception among the peasantry. Ranga talked of modernization of the peasants' social and cultural outlook so that they might prepare themselves socially and politically to establish their millenarian peasant raj or *Swarajya*. This perception was repeatedly put forward in Ranga's speeches and articles.⁷¹ In the course of his speech at the Andhra Pradesh Ryots Conference, Bezwada, on 5 November 1929, Ranga, after elaborating on the benefits of *Swaraj* said:⁷²

If the ryots won't work from now onwards with alertness, social unity and cooperation in thinking and capture the coming *Swarajya* Government, then the present Government's policies would be established in a different form and destroy the ryots.

Therefore, he said, the peasantry should be organized as an independent political force and yet operate within the national movement to reap the benefits of *Swarajya* by establishing their political hegemony. Ranga was, of course, clearly aware of the fact that Congress could not afford to be openly hostile to his strategy of developing an independent peasant organization within the national liberation struggle. To quote:⁷³

. . . The Congress was not so keen about our growing passion for politico-economic activity but it needed our political support for its national liberation movement. We in our turn also needed its political support for our economic advancement.

It was precisely in this changing social and political atmosphere that the popular pressure was exercised through the APCC to change the creed of the Indian National Congress to *Poorna Swaraj* or complete independence. Balusu Sambamurty moved a resolution recommending to the Indian National Congress to be held at Gauhati to substitute the words 'Complete Independence without the British Empire' for the word *Swaraj* in the first article of the Constitution of Congress. He was

reported to have remarked that '*Swaraj* was not a gift of the British Government but it should be got by their own strength, by their own effort, by their own soul power and sacrifice'.⁷⁴ When this resolution was passed along with another one on 'Civil Disobedience', moved by Subramanyam, there was bitter opposition from the older Congressmen ultimately leading to T. Prakasam's resignation. Later, however, he withdrew his resignation as a compromise.⁷⁵ The text of the resolution on civil disobedience along with the complete independence resolution, indicates the changing political perception among the majority of the nationalists, especially the younger elements:⁷⁶

Whereas this Conference believes that the country is ready to do Civil Disobedience on a large scale since it is the chief means for the attainment of *Swaraj* and that the time has come for resorting to it, this Conference requests on an extensive scale for civil disobedience

Again in May 1927 similar pressure was exercised on the A.P.C.C. by the younger nationalists led by B. Sambamurthy.⁷⁷ It was due to this constant pressure exercised on the provincial associations like APCC and then on the AICC that the Congress accepted a resolution on complete independence at its 1927 annual session in Madras. Interestingly in Madras it was young Jawaharlal Nehru who moved this resolution and got it through despite opposition. By the end of 1929 the AICC had no other way but to bow before mounting public pressure and finally declare *poorna swaraj* as its goal with Civil Disobedience as its weapon to attain that *swaraj*.

When the Indian National Congress gave a call for the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 the social groups in the forefront in Andhra were women, youth (mostly with the peasant backgrounds) peasantry and, to some extent, untouchables. This new wide social base of the National Movement could be explained rationally only by taking into consideration the spread of new social and political perceptions preceeding this movement. In other words the radicalization of the national consciousness and the national liberation struggle was not a consequence of the Gandhian eleven-point programme. In fact, the Gandhian eleven-point programme was only a limited response to the changing social and political perceptions and the consequent pressure from below on the National Movement. Not surprisingly after their practical experience with the Gandhian paradigm of struggle in 1930-31 most of the young radical nationalists disappointed and switched over to socialist and communist ideas and struggles after 1934.

Thus started the bitter struggle for ideological and political hegemony over the national liberation struggle, i.e., between the left and the bourgeois ideologies. • /

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 The increasing popularity and mass political agitations of the Indian National Congress and the emergence of numerous caste associations were said to have been the main cause for the decline of social reform movements in Andhra. See V Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1949-1919)*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1983, pp 182-3, 189, 197-204, 208-11.
- 2 All the quotations are from Gandhi's letter to Mrs Maddock, dt 14 March 1924, in *Gandhi Collected Works*, Vol XXIII, March 1922-May 1924, Delhi, 1987, p 244.
- 3 For examples, see *Kistna Patrika*, 28 March and 5 Dec, 1925, 23 Feb, 11 May, 9 and 16 Nov, 1929, *Lokamanya*, Feb-April 1924, *Rural India*, Feb, Aug and Nov 1929, Feb 1930, *Andhra Patrika*, 18 June 1924, 9 Feb 1925, 4 Feb 1930 and there are several issues in 1932-33, *Anasuya*, for years 1923-24, *The Satyagrahi*, 4 Nov, 1928.
- 4 Ibid, and *Yuvakulu-Deesamu* ('Youth and Nation'), Pamphlet-I, issued by NM Choudary, Secretary, Sri Sodara Samiti, Kakunada, 1923. Several books were also published by the nationalists during this period. For a brief analysis with some extracts of important works, see Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, *Telugu Sahityamu-Gandhi: Prabhavamu* ('Influence of Gandhi on Telugu Literature'), Hyderabad, 1970, D Nagaswara Sastri, *Panchamas* ('Untouchables'), Vijayawada, 1936, V Sambhu Sastri, *Antaranitanamu* ('Untouchability'), Bezawada, 1923.
- 5 Unnava Lakshminarayana, *Malapalli (Sanga Vijayam)*, First pub in 1922, 4th reprint 1964, Triveni publishers, Masulipatam. *Malapalli*, the original title, literally means a village hamlet where untouchables—mostly Mala and Madiga castes—lived. This novel was also titled as 'Sanga Vijayam'—'Victory of Sanga', a character in the novel. The novel, however, is popular among Telugu readers only as *Malapalli*. For the summary of the novel, see Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, *Telugu Navala Vikasam* ('Evolution of Telugu Novel'), Telugu, Hyderabad, 1971, pp 255-69.
- 6 Srinivasa Siromani, 'Malapalli Nirmata Unnava Lakshminarayana', *Bharati*, Vol 22, No 11, 7 Nov 1945, p 402.
- 7 For English translation of the important parts of the novel and a brief analysis, see Atlury Murali, *Social Change and Nature of Social Participation in National Movement in Andhra, 1905-1934*, unpublished Ph D thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi, 1985, chapter VII, Section 4.
- 8 *Malapalli*, p 90.
- 9 Ibid, pp 137-59.
- 10 Gwyn A Williams, *Proletarian Order, Antonio Gramsci, Factory Councils and the Origins of Communism in Italy, 1911-1921*, London, 1980, Martin Clark, *Antonio Gramsci and the Revolution that Failed*, London, 1977, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, London, 1980, especially Part II.
- 11 *Malapalli*, p 153.
- 12 Ibid, pp 155-56.
- 13 This dimension was shown through 'Takkella Jaggaadu' and several of his statements. See ibid, pp 599-600 and passim.
- 14 Gurram Jhashava Kavi, 'Prabodhamu' ('Wisdom'), *Bharati*, Vol 7, No 4, 8 April 1930, p 640. Only the last poem is translated from Telugu.
- 15 See column 'Veegulavadu' ('Spy'), *Bharata Kathanidhi*, Vol 1, No 9, Feb 1927, p 17. Women's journals like the *Andhra Lakshmi* were very active in mobilizing public opinion against the evils of child marriages. See, for instance, 'Sarada Leekhalu', ibid, Vol II, Nos 8-9, Aug-Sept 1923. Also see N Simhadri Rao, 'Musalamma Vilapamu' ('Old Woman's Sorrow', short story), *Bharata Kathanidhi*, Vol IV, No 9, Feb 1930.
- 16 T Narayana Sastri, 'Padma', *Lokamanya*, Vol I, Nos 3-5, Feb-April 1924, p 80. We have translated the first and the last two poems out of a total of five.
- 17 Mrs A Bhaskaramma, 'Ati Blaya Vivahamulu' ('Very Early Child Marriages'), *Bharati*, Vol 4, No 12, 7 Dec 1927, pp 125-8. Also see Sri Yagnavalkya, pub from

26 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

- Kakinada, edited by Gadicharla Suryanarayana, Telugu, Vol 5, No. 1, 1927, and the resolutions of All-Andhra Yagnavalkya Conference, held at Samisra Gudem Village, Nidadol, on 8, 9 Feb 1927, pp 9-16
- 18 For instance, see Guda Apparao's article, 'Balya Vivahamulu' ('Child Marriages'), *Padmasali Patrika*, Vol 7, No 12, March 1929, pp 4-7, Sikharam Koteswara Gupta's two-part article, 'Rajeswala Vivahamandanam', *Vasavi*, Vol 1, No 2, April 1925, pp 20-23 and Vol 1, No 3, May 1926, pp 10-12
- 19 See *Upadhyaya Patrika* (Telugu monthly from Nandyal, editor B U Devaraju, B A, L T), Vol 2, No 2, November 1929, pp 8-12, *Gruha Lakshmi* (Telugu monthly for women), Sept 1929, *Satya Sadhani*, 30 Sept 1929, *Reddi Rani* (Telugu monthly from Rayavaram, East Godavari district, Editor Mallidi Sathi Raju), Vol 6, No 9, 30 Sept 1929, *Vasavi* (Arya Vaisya Yuva Jana Maha Sangham's Telugu monthly from Chennapuram, editor T V Bhagavati, B A), see all issues from May 1928 to November 1929, *Andhra Patrika*, *Kistna Patrika* and *Bharati* for years 1928-29
- 20 This summary of the story is from *Sri Sadhana* (published from Anantapur), 31 August 1929
- 21 See *Vasavi*, from 1926 to 1929
- 22 For details, see Darisi Chenchiah, *Nenu Naadesam* ('Autobiography'), Vijayawada, 1967, pp 283-314
- 23 Ibid, pp 336-46
- 24 Ibid, pp 347-55
- 25 *Vasavi*, Vol 1, No 2, April, Vol 1, No 3, May 1926, Vol 2, No 10, Jan 1928
- 26 Ibid, Darisi Chenchiah, *Autobiography*, pp 283
- 27 For instance, see ibid, passim, *Vasavi*, Vol 1, No 2, April 1926
- 28 Darisi Chenchiah, ibid, pp 372-3 and 393
- 29 This new social awareness was brought by consistent propaganda on the part of intellectuals. It was remarked by A Lakkaraju Nayudu of the *Satyasadhani* (a Telugu journal), in 1929, 'Making efforts to eradicate the evil practice of child marriages from Indian society, several speeches were made and articles were written by women and men, criticizing and countering the arguments of orthodox sections and then explaining the bad effects of such practices to the people'. See his letter in the *Reddy Rani*, Vol 6, No 9, 30 September 1929, p 40
- 30 *Kistna Patrika*, 9 November 1929
- 31 For instance, see the histories of 'Sri Sarada Samajam' of Anantapur established on 3 January 1919, in the *Andhra Lakshmi*, Vol 1, No 2, February 1922, pp 25-27 and of 'Andhra Desa Vaisya Strila Sadanam' of Kakinada established by Smt Battula Kamakshamma in 1920, in ibid, Vol 1, No 5, May 1922, pp 29-30. For more information on girl 'schools' and 'ashramas' in Andhra, see *Andhra Patrika*, *Kistna Patrika*, *Vasavi* and *Bharati* for years 1924 to 1929
- 32 In the course of my discussions with K N Panikkar (Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) he clarified many of my doubts on the character of social reform movements and the attitude of intelligentsia towards crucial socio-cultural questions and women's liberation in relation to the national liberation movement in India. I am deeply indebted to him for he allowed me to freely use some of his most perceptive formulations, in my analysis on cultural aspects of the Indian national liberation struggle, which he is elaborating in his project on 'Intellectual Cultural Development in Colonial and Contemporary India, 19th and 20th Centuries'. Therefore, some of the formulations which I have used in this section are echoes of his original formulations
- 33 For instance see articles in *Andhra Lakshmi*, Vol 1, No 1, January 1922, pp 27-30, Vol 1, No 6, June 1922, pp 17-20, Vol 2, No 5, May 1923, pp 13-15 and 29-35, Vol 2, No 10, October 1923, pp 10-11, 19-22, 25-27 and 33-40, Vol 2, No 11, November 1923, pp 5-7, Vol 3, No 1, January 1924, pp 11-14 and 24-26
- 34 The best examples are the articles written by women writers, 'Etti Stri Vidhya Kavalenu?' ('What Type of Female Education is Needed?') by M V Meenakshi Sundaramma, *Andhra Lakshmi*, Vol 1, No 1, January 1922, pp 12-14, 'Pati Bhakti' by Erneni Sheshamma, ibid, Vol 1, No 2, February 1922, pp 12-13, 'Pati Bhakti' (drama), *Andhrabhyudayam*, Vol 1, No 1, March 1924, pp 36-39, 'Strila Ketti Vidhya Avasaramu?' ('What Type of Education for Women is Needed?') by Mrs N Rajyalakshamma, originally published by *Gruha Lakshmi* and later reproduced, in *Sarada* (Editor, Vanam Sankara Sarma, Partukonda, Kurnool district), Vol 1, No 11, 22 January 1932, pp 88-89
- 35 *Andhra Lakshmi*, Vol 1, No 2, February 1922, p 12

- 36 See the speech of Smt Desabhandhavi Subbamma, *The Hindu*, 28 May 1925
- 37 *The Hindu*, 28 May 1925, also reproduced in M Venkatarangaiya, *The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra)*, Vol III (1921-1931), Hyderabad, 1965, p 400
- 38 In 1929 an interesting article, '*Strilu Naatakaranga Pravesam*' ('Women and their Entry into Theatre') was written by Mrs Pulavarti Kamalavati Devi. After making a critique of the negative outlook among men towards women's participation in theatre she advocated of women. The active participation *Vasavi*, Vol 4, No 3, June 1929, pp 83-89. There was some interesting discussion published in one Telugu journal which shows the newly emerging positive consciousness among men. See *Reddi Rani*, Vol 6, No 9, 30 Sept 1929. The best example was the speech given by Smt Achanta Rukminamma, presiding over the meeting of Andhra Mahila Sabha, at Bezwada, on 23 November 1929. The main themes of her speech were (1) marriage alliance (she advocated a divorce law both for Hindu and Muslim women), (2) legislation prohibiting child marriage, (3) economic freedom (advocated for equal property rights in the family and a change in law in favour of these rights), (4) evil practices in society, (5) the present educational system (here she advocated modern and higher education for girls), and (6) freedom of life. See for full report, *Kistna Patrika*, 30 November 1929.
- 39 Originally published, in the *Gruha Lakshmi* this article, '*Stri Vidya*' ('Women's Education'), was reproduced, in *Sarada*, Vol 1, No 12, 20 January 1932, pp 91-92. Only the last two paras are translated from original Telugu (p 92).
- 40 *Bharati*, Vol 1, No 11, November 1924, p 104. Only stanza nos 1, 6, 7 and 8 are translated from Telugu.
- 41 *Ibid*, Vol. 1, No 5, May 1924, p 134.
- 42 *Ibid*, Vol 4, No 3, 7 March 1927, pp 88-89.
- 43 *The Satyagrahi*, 11 February 1929.
- 44 *Swecha*, by Parachuru Sundaravaradulu, in *Kistna Patrika*, 12 January 1929, p 11. Translated from Telugu.
- 45 The English names of the flowers (in the same order as written in the stanza) are, Jasmine, Double Jasmine, Gold flower, Wild Jasmine, Mangold, Mimulus, Clengi flower, Chrysanthemum and Rose.
- 46 *Sahiti* (Editor, Tallavajjula Sivasankara Sastri, '*Sahiti Samiti*', Tenali, Guntur dt started in 1922), *Bharati*, *Jwala*, *Pratibha*, *Samadarshini*, *Udayini*, etc., were the most popular journals which popularized different trends in Telugu literature, especially poems and short stories. Among the newspapers *Andhra Patrika* and *Kistna Patrika* had regular literary features. *Andhra Patrika Ugadi Sanchikalai* (annual numbers) were very popular.
- 47 Basavaraju Apparao popularized *Preminchu Premakai* ('Love for Love's Sake') in his poems. In his poem *Samudram* ('Sea') published in *Bharati*, Vol I, No 6, June 1924, p 99, he says
- 1 What would be the depth
Of this sea O 'Chitti'?
 - 2 Won't they say
It is endless?
 - 3 Near this Ocean
Your heart of endless depth
I don't know why, 'Chitti',
Came to my thought suddenly!
 - 4 In your vast
Sea of love I drop
As a small stream
My love is rackonless?
- 48 All these poems are reproduced, in Gurajada Raghava Sarma, *Jaateeya Geetaalu*, ('Nationalist Songs'), Hyderabad, 1973, pp 208, 214, 394, 272, 382, 88, 271, 272 (respectively). All the poems of Basavaraju were published, in *Basavaraju Apparao Geetaalu* (poems of Basavaraju Apparao), also see Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, op cit, pp 88-93. To show his view of life under alien rule we translate, here, his poem *Naa Jeevita Naatakam* ('Drama of my life'), published in *Bharati*, Vol 4, No 5, 7 May 1927, p 38.
- 1 I can't enact these false dramas
Bring down the curtain, playing

Useless and mean disguises'
Deceiving for a living
Coaxing and begging others
(aliens), I can't live!

2 Forgetting the courageous birth,
Why should I sin, acting for others' benefit,
Making my agitated life as a drama,
And staging it, can't
I delight this world?

- 49 *Bharati*, Vol 3, No 7, 7 July 1926, p 39, also see his poems, *Samtrupti* ('Satisfaction') and *Teerthayatra* ('Pilgrimage'), in *Jana Ranjani*, Vol 1, Nos 1&2, Aug-Oct 1924, pp 8, 46
- 50 *Bharati*, Vol 1, No 10, October 1924, p 157 Among other poets who were part of the national liberation struggle and wrote extensively to popularize new perceptions were Punpanda Appalaswami, Pudipeddi Venkataramanaiah, Turaga Venkataramaiah, Sri Sri, Katuri Venkateswara Rao, Mangapudi Purushothama Sarma, Gannavarapu Subbarmaiah, Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, Muddukrishna, Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma, Visweswara Rao, Indraganti Hanumat Sastri, etc., to name few
- 51 *Bharati*, Vol 5, No 3, 7 March 1928, p 383, also see the poem *Karshaka* ('Ryot') by Jasthi Sreeramulu Chowdary, in *ibid*, Vol 6, No 3, 7 March 1929, p 350
- 52 Divakarla Venkatavadhani, *Andhra Vangmayacharitra* ('History of Telugu Literature'), Hyderabad, 1958, pp 98-99 Devulapalli Krishna Sastri's total writings were published by Vishalandra publishing House, Vijayawada
- 53 *Bharati*, Vol 3, No 3, 8 March 1926, pp 34-41 (Stanzas translated are from p 35)
- 54 Modala Nagabhushana Sarma, *Telugu Sahityam Gandhiji Prabhavam* (Telugu), Hyderabad, 1972, p 97
- 55 The Kavita Samiti after 1926 had regular annual sessions at several places in Andhra, first in the name of 'Sakalandra Kavi Sammelanam' (President, Nadakuduti Veerraju) and later as 'Akhilandra Kavipanditha Sabha' (first meeting at Berhampore probably during 1926-27 and then at Rajamundry) After its Kakinada session this association came to be known as 'Navya Saahitya Parishat' (probably in 1930-31) 'Kavita Samiti' had celebrated the completion of its first decade during 1935
- 56 Due to space constraint we are not taking up Sri Sri's poetry written during 1924-33 In order to understand the rapid change in the perceptions (social and political) of nationalist poets one should perhaps read Sri Sri's early poetry and then compare it with his post 1933-34 poetry. See K V Ramana Reddy (ed), *Sri Sri Sahityam*, Vol 1, 1925-35-40, Madras, 1970, for another example of this type of change, see Indraganti Hanumat Sastri, *Telugu Vina* (anthology of poems), Ramachandrapuram, 1934, Sabnaveesu Gurunadharao, *Geeyagu-chhamu* (collection of poems), 1936
- 57 Sri Sri, *Mahaprasthanam*, Vijayawada, 1954, p 24 This poem was published on 14 April 1934
- 58 Originally written on 12 April 1934 it was published in the *Jwala*, 16 January 1935, p 16 and is reproduced in *Mahaprasthanam*, op cit, pp 17-19
- 59 For poems written by others during this period, see *Bharati*, 1926 to 1936, *Andhra Patrika Ugadi Sanchika*, 1925 to 1936, *Jwala* (Editor, Muddu Krishna, Bezvada) 1934 to 1935, Sabnaveesu Gurunadharao, op cit, Indraganti Hanumat Sastri, op cit
- 60 Uppala Laxmana Rao, *Bathuku Pusthakam* ('The Book of Life', Autobiography), Vijayawada, 1983, *Adhunikandhra Saraswatam* ('Modern Andhra Literature'), Guntur, 1983, pp 25-32
- 61 Cherukuvada Narasimhan Pantulu wrote the 'History of the Congress' in Telugu, much before Pattabhi Sitaramaiah, which popularized Gandhian ideas in Andhra villages Other important books were Cherukuvada, *Swarajya Darpanamu*, 1921, Kamaraju Hanumantha Rao, *Navya Bharatoodayamu*, 1927, Manikonda Satyanarayana Sastri, *Gandhi Tatvopadesamu*, 1922, Mudiganti Jagganna Sastri and Sanivarapu Subha Rao (eds), *Gandhi Mahatmani Neetimanjari* (the translation of articles written by Gandhi in *Young India* and *Navajivan*), 1926, Veeluri Sivarama Sastri, *Atma Katha*, 1931-2, an authentic autobiography of Gandhi translated into Telugu and published by 'Andhra Grandha Mala' There were also a number of biographies on Gandhi in Telugu For instance, see Manikonda

- Satyanarayana Sastri, *Sri Gandhi Mahatmuni Jeevitham*, 1921, Atmakuri Govindacharyulu, *Gandhi Mahatmuni Charitra*, 1921, etc
- 62 For a brief on its major elements, see Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, op cit, p 214, for information on different types of books written on Gandhi or inspired by Gandhi, see *ibid.*, pp 209-218
- 63 *Kistna Patrika*, 25 June 1921
- 64 The money which they got by selling this book was given to famine relief work in Russia. In this book the author analysed the historical significance of the October revolution in Russia and vividly narrated the leadership role played by Lenin. Lenin's thesis adopted by the Second International in June 1920 was reproduced as an appendix to the book. See Kambhampati Satyanarayana, *Andhra Pradeshlo Communist Udyama Charitra* ('History of Communist Movement in Andhra Pradesh'), Vol I, Vijayawada, 1983, pp 19-20
- 65 *Andhra Patrika*, Ugadi Sanchika, April 1921, pp 57-64. This is reproduced in Kambhampati Satyanarayana's book, *ibid*, Appendix-2, pp 182-190
- 66 *Ibid*, pp 189-90 (translated from Telugu)
- 67 *Janmabhumi*, 19 January 1922
- 68 See the translation of *Mahaprasthanam* above
- 69 V V Krishna Rao, *Andhra Pradesh Swatantranikimundu Ryotu Pooratalu, Ryotu Sanghalu* ('Peasant Struggles and Peasant Associations before Independence'), Vijayawada, 1981, p 14
- 70 'Krishukar Lok's Aims and Objects', N G Ranga's Presidential Address for the First Andhra Convention of Krishukar Lok Party, Tenali, Guntur district, dt 7th and 8th May 1954, Tenali, 1954, p 14
- 71 *Ryotangam* (Editor, B T Narasimha Charyulu, Chennapatnam, Telugu monthly), Vol I, No 1, October 1928, pp 4-8, Vol I, No 7, April 1929, pp 3-5 the most interesting one is his *Ryotu Biddalakoka Sandeesam* ('One message to peasant sons') in *Rural India*, Vol IV, No 7, July 1929, pp 150-59, also see Vol IV, No 12, Dec 1929, pp 269-81, Vol V, No 1, January 1930, pp 7-8
- 72 *Rural India*, Vol IV, No 12, Dec 1929, pp 269-81. The translated para is from pp 280-81 from Telugu. This is only the first part of his speech. For the second part, see *ibid*, Vol V, No 1, January 1930, pp 7-8. In this part he elaborated on what type of *Swarajya* the ryots would benefit under and the necessity of capturing political power
- 73 N G Ranga's Presidential Address (1954), op cit, pp 14-15
- 74 *The Hindu*, 1 Dec 1926, also reproduced in M Venkatarangaiya, Vol III, pp 420-25
- 75 *Ibid*
- 76 *Ibid*, p 423, also see GOM, G O No 691, pub (Confid), dt 1st August 1927
- 77 *The Hindu*, 20 May 1927

ATIS DASGUPTA*

Variations in Perception of the Insurgent Peasants of Bengal in the Late Eighteenth Century

This paper shall deal with the problem of explicating certain stages in the realm of perception of the rebel peasants in the late eighteenth century Bengal. The purpose of this explication is to understand variations in the perception of such insurgents with regard to the early colonial domination as well as their own role against the domination. Our investigation, however, will be limited to two uprisings of the period—the Fakir-Sannyasi (1761-1800) and Rangpur (1783)—and the appraisals will be based on the data collected in this regard.

We are not repeating here the well-known set of information, available from contemporary official records, on the basic economic changes which started taking shape in Bengal, particularly after the East India Company's assumption of *diwani* in 1765, unleashing the crucial drive to enhance the land revenue of the province. It is now generally recognized that the collection of this enhanced revenue, which was essential for financing one-way export trading and the administrative expenses of the Company, was mostly carried out by a group of new intermediaries and that the ultimate burden was placed ruthlessly on the small peasants. It is also known that this increased revenue burden gave birth to a major contradiction in Bengal during the 'mercantile' colonial phase and formed, in a nutshell, the material basis of peasant resistance across the last four decades of the eighteenth century. We are skipping such official information and imputations therefore because, in spite of the importance of these structural data and quantitative details, the pivotal question remains almost unanswered: 'How did the peasants themselves look at the unprecedented domination of their village economy by the alien East India Company and its new intermediaries?' Furthermore it remains much less unanswered whether there was any variation in this perception of the peasantry.

We shall, therefore, have to begin with exploring a different category of source materials as well as reinterpreting the existing official data. In other words, we shall primarily locate and consider such records which are expected to reflect the viewpoint of the insur-

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gents. These are mostly non-official documents. The official sources (i.e., the records preserved by the English East India Company) can only be taken into account in so far as these may be reinterpreted and made amenable to provide certain information, albeit, indirectly, on the motivations of the rebel peasants. In the category of non-official documents, two near-contemporary Bengali verses have been located which sought to depict the Fakir-Sannyasi and the Rangpur uprisings, by and large, from the side of the insurgents: one is *Majnu Shaher Hakikat* and the other is known as *Rangpurer Jager Gan*. The *Hakikat* was composed by Jamiruddih Dafadar, a local poet of Birbhum, in 1873. The manuscript has been recently printed as an appendix to *Bidrohi Fakir Nayak Majnu Shah*, written by M. Abdur Rahman. The *Jager Gan* was composed by Ratiram Das soon after the Rangpur rising and was later published in *Rangpurer Sahitya Parishad Patrika* (1315 BS). The manuscript was reprinted in Narahari Kaviraj's work, *A Peasant Uprising in Bengal, 1783* (Delhi, 1972).

As an immediate reaction to the colonial inroads, the major perception of the peasants at the initial stage was focussed around the mounting burden of increased revenue and the severe methods introduced by the new intermediaries or the new zamindars of the East India Company. This perception comes out sharply from the passages of both the *Hakikat* and the *Jager Gan*.

The passages, after translation, would run as.

There was a *mazar* of Darvish Hamid
in the domain of Asaduzzaman
(the old zamindar of Birbhum)
There in the Khanqah of the old Pir Khadim
came Majnu Fakir to offer his *Salam*.
Khadim urged Majnu in despair:
'Lakhs of people are dying in famine,
try to save their lives!
The Company's agents and *picks*
torture tillers and ryots
for exorbitant revenue, and
people are deserting villages'

The same resentment against the Company's imposition of exorbitant revenue and the merciless extraction by the agents can be heard from the following lines of *Rangpurer Jager Gan*:

Under the Company, the ruler was Debi Singh
Because of his misdeeds, the country faced famine.
Revenue assessment was not fixed,
but the extraction from the peasants steadily increased
His only aim was to demand more and more;
Under severe torture a wail of agony arose

This, then, was the general level of perception at the initial stage, shared by the aggrieved peasants during the formative period of both the Fakir-Sannyasi and the Rangpur risings. At the next stage of perception when the insurgents sought to articulate the causal factor for their recent sufferings, they inducted a sort of moral overtone. The functioning of the East India Company was, by and large, transmitted to them through the ruthless operations of a new group of zamindars or intermediaries who initially replaced the traditional zamindars. To the ryots and the traditional zamindars alike, the unjust method of revenue extraction by the alien intermediaries appeared as a sharp deviation from *rajdharm* or the traditional behaviour pattern which had so long been morally expected from the ruling class. The following passages of *Jager Gan* bring this out clearly

When the country was perishing in famine,
 Debī Singh, the arch villain,
 was busy plundering the people
 . . . Sivchandra (the traditional zamindar),
 the pride of the Baidyas,
 could not bear the oppression any longer.
 He convened all zamindars of Rangpur
 and invited the cultivators as well
 Sivchandra stood up to speak with folded hands,
 as he spoke he wept in anger.
 He pointed out the tillers to the zamindars,
 and said: 'how could you
 take food without caring
 for these starving subjects?
 Too often there were floods from the north,
 and the paddy fields were inundated
 I had spent time, labour and money
 to dyke the bend of river Caruah
 But, now, the subjects perish
 for the sins of the new king
 There is no water for irrigation,
 paddy field is scorched down and
 nothing is left at home
 . . . I went down to reason with
 the vicious Raja Debī Singh,
 but his hoodlums put me in fetters
 Look at the condition of the cultivators,
 dear zamindars, and do,
 whatever you deem proper.
 Sivchandra lost his temper and spoke again
 'Since the Rajput robber is a scoundrel,
 you should all drive him out'

The above lines have, by and large, projected a code of moral norms which used to be followed by the ruling class, in general, and the zamindars, in particular, before the introduction of British rule. Such norms included precautionary measures to be undertaken by the zamindars against flood and drought; similarly imposition of excessive burden of revenue on the ryots was discouraged at a time when agricultural production suffered natural disaster. A question was asked, in the above passages, which brings out the benevolent ethos rather poignantly 'How could you (the zamindars) take food without caring for these starving subjects?' The colonial encroachment, which was spearheaded by the upstart intermediaries like Debi Singh who did not care to follow any of the above norms, shattered the pre-colonial paternalistic ethos completely. Debi Singh—the main target of the Rangpur rebels—appeared in the perception of both the ryots and the traditional zamindars as the symbol of negation and destruction of *rajdharm* so long cherished. The material loss and sufferings of the peasantry, according to this stage of perception, were closely interrelated with the moral degradation of the new ruling class. Thus 'now the subjects perish for the sins of the new king'. Therefore, when the insurgent mood gathered momentum, which was shared by the peasants and the traditional zamindars alike, it was loaded with moral overtones.

Confusion, however, tended to crop up at the next stage of perception when variations could be found as regards the ability of the rebels and the English East India Company. These intermediaries, as it is now well known, were directly encouraged by the officials of the East India Company to replace the old zamindars through the process of public auction of land. As early as in 1775, the Court of Directors of the Company in their minutes of 15th September remarked 'We have reason to believe that not less than one-third of the Company's lands are or have lately been held by the Banians of English gentlemen. The Governor's Banian stands foremost by the enormous amount of his farms and contracts.' Between 1765 and 1777 'lands were let in general too high, and to find out the real value of the lands the most probable method was to let them to highest bidders and also to dispose of the farms by public auction'.¹ With the help of these intermediaries who could be willingly ruthless, unhampered by 'roots that clutch', collection of land revenue was increased more than four times (from Rs 6.5 million to Rs 26 million) between 1765 and 1784, and the burden of this phenomenal enhancement, as we have noted earlier, was ultimately placed on the small peasants.

As regards the perception of the peasants on the causal factor for this unprecedented revenue burden, it, however, tended to vary between the participants in the Rangpur rebellion and the insurgents of the Fakir-Sannyasi uprisings. In so far as the East India Company could use Debi Singh and his associates as a sort of effective buffer, the rebel peasants of Rangpur could not perceive beyond the new intermediaries. They

missed the crucial connection of the intermediaries with the Company and placed the blame for their sufferings solely on the former. The Company had also used the tactical double standard—by projecting officers like Goodlad as a kind of hard taskmaster, while allowing officials like David Paterson to assume the role of a benevolent problem-solver. In the event, the confused peasants drifted and finally sent their appeal to the authorities of the Company for undoing the misdeeds of Debi Singh and his associates. This confusion comes out distinctly from the concluding lines of *Jager Gan*, when, even after driving out Debi Singh by dint of their own collective resistance, the peasants sought and praised the judicial arbitration of the East India Company:

Debi Singh escaped, under cover, \\
either to Murshidabad or to Dacca
The Lord entrusted
the English with the kingdom,
and the Company carried out justice.
The Englishmen held a trial,
and Debi Singh's associates
were put in prison, one after another

The rebels, or rather the composer of *Jager Gan*, could not perceive that a new group of intermediaries were soon despatched by the Company to Rangpur, after a 'show' of punishing the associates of Debi Singh, and that no worthwhile remission was made in respect of revenue collection for the subsequent years.

In striking contrast to the perception of the rebel peasants of Rangpur, the insurgents of the Fakir-Sannyasi uprisings could see through the vital linkage between the new intermediaries and the East India Company. The moral overtone, which we have already noted at the outset of the Rangpur rebellion, found a deeper expression in the case of the Fakir-Sannyasi uprisings. The mood was particularly captured in *Majnu Shaher Hakikat* where the old Pir extended a sort of religious sanction to Majnu Shah, the chief leader of the uprisings, to raise the banner of revolt against the Company in unison with the Hindu (Naga Dasnamī) Sannyasis:

Majnu came back,
touring the districts widely
Along with him,
also came his disciples
Majnu told the old Pir
all his experience, vivid and traumatic.
The Pir broke into tears in rage and anguish,
and then gave an inspiring call
"Take up arms,

unite with Naga Sannyasis,
 raid the storage where rice was hoarded,
 distribute all provisions among the starved,
 and drive out the English,
 as no alternative is left'

Also the Company could not use their agents (the new zamindars or intermediaries) as a buffer for long and came out openly to 'give every assistance and support to the new zamindars against any attempt by the Sannyasis (and the Fakirs) to oppress or injure them.'² In the face of the stubborn resistance of the Fakirs and the Sannyasis who were functioning in close association with the peasantry, the officials of the Company did not have much room to manoeuvre any double standard. Consequently, Warren Hastings, one of the most prominent architects of British colonial rule in eastern India, had to issue a circular letter, on 21st January 1773, to the Collectors,

to keep a particular eye over the motion of the people known by the name of Sannyasis (and Fakirs) whose incursions of late had been frequent and distressing to the country. They (the Collectors) were further directed . . . to give public notice that all such persons and bodies of men (the Fakirs and the Sannyasis) travelling armed through the country will be regarded as enemies of the Government and pursued accordingly.³

The Fakirs and the Sannyasis are also known to have never opted for sending any form of appeal to the authorities of the East India Company. From the beginning their attitude was one of confrontation. The following communication from the Collector of Rajshahi brings this out unambiguously. On 26th June 1776, Gladwin reported from Bogra the arrival of Majnu Shah, the leader of the uprisings, along with other insurgents at Mahasthangarh. 'I sent the Cawzi (Kazi) to inquire from him (Majnu), in my name, what were his intentions. . . He (Majnu) said if I offered to attack him, he was not afraid but ready to oppose.'⁴

Depending on this variation in perception of the rebels as regards the crucial connection between the East India Company and the new zamindars or intermediaries, the targets of the insurgents in the Fakir-Sannyasi and the Rangpur uprisings tended to differ after following a similar course for some distance. To the extent the urgency to oppose the mounting burden of revenue remained the focal point of perception, the rebels in both the uprisings organized their thrusts in a fairly comparable manner—collective drive to forcefully intercept and recapture the increased revenue usually stored at the *kutchery* of the new zamindars or intermediaries, the subsequent call for non-payment of revenue, and the following attempt to evolve a parallel system of revenue collection and improvise a kind of rebel government machinery.

Certain concrete examples may be cited from the contemporary records relating to the Fakir-Sannyasi and the Rangpur uprisings. Thus, the Company's Supervisor at Natore reported the following operation of the Fakirs during January 1772 'This morning . . . the Fakirs moved to Kolegong . . . in Silberis (Bogra) . . . and they have taken Rs. 1690 from the *kutchery* of Jaysin which had been deserted . . . on the approach of this banditti'.⁵ The *Hakikat* has described similar thrust of the insurgents in the following lines

Thousands of Fakirs responded to the call,
and they stood behind Majnu, their leader
Also the Sannyasis assembled and fraternized
Jointly the rebels attacked the *kutcheries*
and ravaged the Company's *kuthis*
to recapture revenue and provisions.
The English were afraid and crestfallen
But the ryots were encouraged,
and they hoped
that their sufferings would
come to an end

Writings to the Court of Directors in October 1774, the Governor-General admitted that 'a considerable part of the deficiency (in the collection of revenue) may be attributed to the plunder, extortion and depredations occasioned by the continued incursions of the Sannyasis'.⁶ Similarly, during the Rangpur uprisings, the ryots attacked the *kutchery* of Kishoreganj in the pargana of Kazirhat and, thereafter, directed their offensive towards the Dimla *kutchery*. There the insurgents entered the *tosha-khana* (store room), opened the chests, and plundered all the cash, papers and records they could find.⁷ As regards the thrusts of the rebels to reject the payment of enhanced revenue and improvise an alternative structure of revenue collection of their own, the Collector of Murshidabad reported in October 1784 'Shaw Mujenoo (Majnu) made his appearance with about two hundred and fifty armed men . . . crossed from Bethoreah (Bhatariah) . . . and began to collect immediately the assessment which he usually makes at every village'.⁸ When the upsurge in Rangpur reached its peak during January-February 1783, the peasant insurgents appointed certain officers to run a sort of parallel government machinery to collect their own revenue, their officers were known as 'nawab', 'dewan', 'bakshi', etc.⁹ Haridas, the dewan, wrote to the ryots of Sarkar Pinjirah in the following terms: 'We have made an insurrection . . . All Coochwanah (Rangpur) are come forth. You do the same and join us. You pay no more revenue'.¹⁰ The rebels also levied a tax throughout the countryside under the head of *ding khurtcha* (insurrection charges) to defray the expenses of the uprising.¹¹

So far the rebels, both in the Fakir-Sannyasi and the Rangpur uprisings, went along similar courses. Thereafter their targets, as we have indicated earlier, tended to vary. The Rangpur rebels concentrated their attacks on the new intermediaries like Debi Singh and his associates. While launching their offensive on the Dimla *kutchery* near Rangpur in early 1783, the peasants searched for Gourmohan (the principal associate of Debi Singh), got hold of him and carried him to Dirjinarain, the rebel leader, soon after the peasants killed Gourmohan mercilessly.¹² On the other hand, the Fakirs and the Sannyasis and their peasant associates, while dealing the new zamundars or intermediaries with no less vengeance, went beyond their immediate target and squarely confronted the English officials and sepoys of the East India Company. The well-known letter of Charles Purling, written to the President in 1772, had depicted a vivid picture of such confrontation.

Captain Thomas pursued them (the Sannyasis) in a jungle where the sepoys expended all their ammunitions without doing the least executions, when they perceived the ammunition spent, the Sinnasies (the Sannyasis) rushed in upon them in very large bodies from every quarter and surrounded . . . Captain Thomas ordered the sepoys to charge upon them with their bayonets which they refused to do . . . Captain received one wound by a ball (missile) through the head which he tied, and next he was cut down. The ryots gave no assistance but joined the Sinnasies (the Sannyasis) with lathis and showed the Sinnasies (the Sannyasis) whom they saw had concealed themselves in long grass and jungle and, if any of the sepoys attempted to go into their villages, they made a noise to bring the Sinnasies (the Sannyasis) and they plundered the sepoy's firelocks.¹³

What, then, are the basic reasons underlying the above variations in perception of the insurgents in the two contemporary uprisings and the consequent divergence as regards the targets of the rebels? The reasons may be sought in two interrelated spheres. The first and rather familiar one is the organizational aspect which brought together different categories of social groups adversely affected by the colonial inroads. The second and not much familiar one is the problem of ideological preparation of the insurgents.

At the organizational level the Rangpur rebels could group together such social groups who were primarily affected by the increased burden of land revenue: the small peasants, the *bosneahs* or the village headmen and the dispossessed petty zamundars of the Mughal era. The small peasants formed the mainstay of the combination, though they chose certain *bosneahs* like Dirjinarain to function as their leader. The traditional zamundars of modest means, like the archetype Sivchandra as described in *Jager Gan*, extended their support to the

aggrieved peasants. In spite of the large number of followers which the insurgents commanded (for example, at Kotalia near Saradhoby almost twelve thousand peasants assembled within short notice)¹⁴, their preparation for armed confrontation was, however, elemental in nature. The peasants opted for direct assault on the *kutchery* and fortifications of the intermediaries like Debi Singh. They could not gather weapons beyond the rudimentary ones and were not prepared for a long-drawn resistance when the forces of the East India Company ultimately intervened to ensure smooth flow of revenue collection. The elemental aggressive onslaught of the peasants on the intermediaries like Debi Singh, which was successful in the short-range perspective, has been described in the following lines of *Jager Gan*.

. the peasants were encouraged at last;
 in thousand they rushed together.
 They took sticks, spears, sickles and choppers,
 For Children, there was none to look after
 The peasants carried their plough
 on their shoulders,
 they ran like savages as they were made beggars
 To Rangpur peasants came from all quarters,
 they started throwing stones and brickbats,
 which kept falling with thud
 from all directions
 In the shower of stones,
 some suffered broken bones,
 and the palace of Debi Singh
 was reduced to a heap of bricks

The organizational character of the Fakir-Sannyasi uprisings, however, took a different shape. The insurgents consisted of a varied group of participants with deeper economic interests and wider experience in combat tactics. In addition to the small peasants (who, again, were particularly desperate due to their *rahi-kasht* or roving movements), the village artisans and the petty dispossessed zamindars were included in the combination which enjoyed the support of the big traditional zamindars of the Mughal times (like Rani Bhavani of Rajshahi and Raja Assaduzzaman Khan of Birbhum) as well as the disbanded mercenaries of the dispossessed landed gentry. Over and above these participants and supporters, the leadership of the uprisings was shared by the Madari Fakirs and the Dasnamis Sannyasis who had deep-rooted trading, moneylending and landed interests of the pre-colonial genre in Bengal and elsewhere under the Mughals. Along with the question of these vital interests which were affected by the colonial inroads of the East India Company in the relevant spheres, both the Dasnamis and the Madaris had a long tradition of bearing arms and they used to participate considerably in the internal

warfare of the princely magnates in different parts of the country throughout the 18th century. Furthermore, the Dasnamis and the Madaris had already struck deep roots in the rural life of Bengal in the course of their religious tours and discourses which used to be well organised through the *maths* and *khanghas*. Thus the participants and the leaders of the Fakir-Sannyasi uprisings were prepared and organized enough to confront the agents as well as the authorities of the East India Company for a long stretch of time.

Normally the combat techniques of these insurgents, unlike those of the Rangpur rebellion, appear to be closer to guerilla tactics. In the language of their adversaries (which can be easily reinterpreted), 'the followers' of the Fakirs and the Sannyasis 'were taught to disperse when pursued and unite again at appointed stations so that it seldom happens that they can be apprehended.'¹⁵ On the appearance of a force of sepoys which the Fakirs and the Sannyasis were unable to cope with, 'they either retire rapidly to their fastness in the hills or separate to elude observation and again assemble and ravage a more defenceless quarter of the country. The Battalion stationed at Taugapore has been found by experience insufficient to protect so extensive a country. It has neither been able effectually to prevent their incursions nor intercept their return.'¹⁶ However, when a situation demanded a frontal confrontation with the force of the Company, the Fakirs and the Sannyasis did not escape and sometimes fought it well. In early 1773, a large group of armed Sannyasis, numbering about 3000, were assembled in the Pargana Barabazu within the district of Dacca. A telling account of the confrontation has been given by Captain Williams. 'Capt Edwards described the Sannyasis about two miles in front of him. He immediately formed his detachment into a column by subdivisions from the right and marched on towards the enemy who, as soon as he came near enough, saluted him with a few rockets. When Captain Edwards thought himself with a proper distance for engaging, he rode to the head of the column and beat to arms intending that the divisions should double upon the left of the leading division as they came up, but the men mistaking the orders wheeled to the left and formed in battalion which laid their right flank open to the enemy. He galloped to the left in order to draw them into line fronting the Sannyasis whilst Douglas exerted himself on the right for the same purpose. But it was too late, for the enemy, perceiving the confusion, rushed in upon them with swords and spears and dispatched a few (mussiles) and put the rest (of the-sepoys) to flight. Douglas was the first that fell. But the fate of Captain Edwards was not known, his hat was found in the *nulla* (rivulet), but the body has never been discovered.'¹⁷

However, the *Hakikat* has pointed out a crucial deficiency in the armoury of the Fakirs and the Sannyasis and a corresponding advantage scored by the English. This was the effective use of cannon

which turned the scale in favour of the Company. Nonetheless, the rebels tried their best to carry on a determined resistance.

At last they (the English) came
reinforced with cannon,
the Fakirs had to retreat,
but they came back again,
attacked the enemy in ambush,
and caught them unawares
Thus the resistance went on,
and the English got no respite
The battles continued for long,
with ups and downs,
and the results inconclusive

Let us now compare the ideological preparation of the Rangpur rebels with that of the Fakir-Sannyasi insurgents. In both the uprisings the major ideological thrust which permeated the perception of the peasants and the other aggrieved social groups was directed to obtain 'justice'—'justice' which was denied to them because of the serious departure of the East India Company and its new intermediaries from the *rajadharma* or the traditional norms of the ruling class which we had mentioned earlier. When the *paiks*, sent by the new intermediaries of Kazirhat, asked the members of a peasant assemblage as to what was their objective, they answered: 'We are going to obtain justice.'¹⁸ But for whom were they asking justice? The peasants and the related groups were asking justice not only for themselves but also for the whole village community whose traditional leadership was provided by the village headmen and, above them, the old zamindars of the Mughal period. Thus, in 1772, Majnu Shah, the chief leader of the Fakir-Sannyasi uprisings, was eloquent in reiterating his traditional loyalty to Rani Bhavani in the face of the Company's offensive

We have for a long time begged and been entertained in Bengal and we have long continued to worship God at the several shrines and altars without ever once abusing or oppressing any one. Nevertheless last year (1771) 150 Fakirs were without cause put to death. The merit which is derived from the murder of the helpless and indigent need not be declared. Formerly the Fakirs begged in separate and detached parties, but now we are all collected and beg together. Displeased at this method they (the English) obstruct us in visiting shrines and other places—this is unreasonable. You are the ruler of the country. We are Fakirs who pray always for your welfare. We are full of hopes.¹⁹

But, the traditional zamindars like Rani Bhavani, who symbolised *rajdharmā* in the perception of the rebels, were now themselves threatened of being dislodged by the new intermediaries of the East India Company. Therefore, the search of the insurgents for 'justice' included their urge to the lost '*rajdharmā*' could be regained that way and, in the process, the recent hardship of the peasants, the artisans and other members of the village community could also be mitigated. It was, thus, a moral assertion for common justice

The above description of perception of the insurgents correspond, by and large, to a kind of 'mixed' ideology which has been explicated by George Rude elsewhere.²⁰ This type of ideology, according to Rude, happens to be a combination of (a) the 'inherent' traditional element, less tangible, based on direct popular experience and oral tradition, such as what Leroy Laduri and Vovelle have called the *mentalites* and *sensibilite collective* of the common people and (b) the 'derived' element which appears to be a stock of a more structured system of ideas and beliefs, political or religious, which the common people received from more articulate social groups. There has been, however, a constant interaction between the two elements. It has often been found that the 'derived' or structured ideas of an era are sometimes a more sophisticated distillation of the people's 'inherent' beliefs across the earlier periods. This general interaction notwithstanding, a delineation can be made in the specific context of explication of certain elements in the perception of the rebel peasants of Bengal, such as their attachment for *rajdharmā* and the search for 'justice'. The attachment of the insurgents for restoration of *rajdharmā* may be included in the category of 'derived' ideas, while their thrusts for 'justice' to mitigate the severe hardship of the colonial regime can be considered as an offshoot of their 'inherent' beliefs.

Variation, however, tends to emerge between the Fakir-Sannyasis and the Rangpur rebels as regards permeation of these 'inherent' and 'derived' elements in their realm of perception. While the Rangpur peasants were quite forthright in their demand for 'justice' and that, too, by establishing *rajdharmā*, they were not, in fact, deeply attached to the erstwhile ruling classes of the Mughal period, excepting their formal support for the dispossessed petty zamindars and the *bosneahs* like Dirjinarain. Consequently, when the East India Company employed the tactics of 'velvet gloves' through the mediational efforts of officials like Paterson, the rebels availed themselves of the opportunity to punish their immediate enemies like Debi Singh by appealing to a sort of 'reformed' *rajdharmā* of the Company, they did not particularly insisted the restoration of *rajdharmā* of the erstwhile Mughal type.

In striking contrast the Fakirs and the Sannyasis strove to explore 'justice' by replacing the rule of the English East India Company altogether by the *rajdharmā* of the pre-colonial Mughal genre. This absorption and articulation of the 'derived' element in the perception

of the Fakirs and the Sannyasis has come out clearly in the telling letter of Majnu Shah, addressed to Rani Bhavani, which we have mentioned earlier. Their deep-rooted loyalty to the Mughal authorities took shape throughout the 18th century when they consistently stood by the side of the traditional ruling class whenever there was any threat from outside. Thus, in the battle of Buxar (1764) which considerably changed the course of political affairs in eastern and northern India, the armed Dasnami (Naga) Sannyasis and the Madari Fakirs played an important role. The author of *Sivar-ul-Mutakhkherin* described the battle of Buxar ' . . . at the elbow of (Prince Shuja-ud-daulah) was Ghossain (Himmat Giri) and Fakir with five thousand gentoos. The Ghossain with his . . . soldiers advanced to the charge . . . ' ²¹ A vast army consisting of Turani Mughals, Pathans and Rajputs fought on the side of Shuja-ud-daulah and Mir Kasim, but none responded with so much enthusiasm to the Wazir's call as the Nagas ²² It is further significant to note that the Fakirs refused to accept the authority of the East India Company to question their rent-free land tenure and free movement with armed followers and that their refusal was based on their age-old rights which were conferred on them by a Mughal *sanad* issued by Shah Shuja (a son of Shahjahan), Governor of Bengal, as early as in 1659 ²³

Such perception of the Fakirs and the Sannyasis as expressed in their emphasis on the 'derived' need for restoration of Mughal authority was not, however, forward-looking. Nevertheless, coupled with their thrust for 'inherent' justice which they shared with the Rangpur rebels to some extent, the so-called 'religious bandits' (as the Fakirs and the Sannyasis were frequently dubbed in the 'prose of counter-insurgency' of the English East India Company) were ideologically equipped in a down-to-earth manner to organize a large section of the peasantry in Bengal to wage a war of resistance for almost forty years at a stretch. Though ultimately defeated by the Company, this long-drawn confrontation led by the Fakirs and the Sannyasis stood out with few parallels in the contemporary society of the late 18th century Bengal, where a pervasive climate of collaboration with the colonial rulers had already started striking its early roots.

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NOTE

Beyond the Altekarian Paradigm: Towards a New Understanding of Gender Relations in Early Indian History

Discussion on the status of women has a unique position in the writing, teaching, and learning of early Indian history. Further, some of the conclusions of this discussion have actually found their way into the syllabi of school and undergraduate courses. For whatever it is worth there is some information on women in almost every text book on ancient India. This kind of information does not occur in any other course of history since there has been no tradition of a separate discussion on the status of women. The uniqueness of the situation made its point while I was correcting examination papers some time ago. A question on the main features of later Vedic civilization resulted in a spate of answers dealing with the position of women. It was clear that to most students one of the important indices of a civilization was the position that women occupied in it. This general understanding is based on an informal debate that took over 150 years to crystallize and percolate down to a large number of people among the upper classes in India.

The existing material on women in early India however has a seriously limiting dimension to it especially when we consider the negative effect that such work has had on a *real* understanding of women in history. It might therefore be worthwhile to explain why the first historians undertook studies of the status of women, why they remained confined essentially to Ancient India, and also review the state of the existing literature so that one may be able to evaluate the worth of the available studies. This will, in turn, help us outline the kind of work that needs to be done in the future.

The women's question took a central place in the early stages of the national movement. The socio-religious reform movements of the nineteenth century advocated a reform of Hindu society whose twin evils were seen as the existence of caste and the low status of women. All the major reformers of the time attacked the practice of *Sati*, child marriage and enforced widowhood, and this was a common platform whether the reformers belonged to the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, the Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra or the Arya Samaj in northern India. The pre-occupation with these questions was derived, at least in part,

from the dominance of Sanskritic models in the nineteenth century, since the major thrust in the debate came from within the upper sections of the Hindu community. The above-mentioned characteristic has survived in the women's question even in contemporary times where the study of the identity of women is based almost entirely on Sanskritic models and the myths conditioning women.

Another feature which has significant consequences for the general debate on the status of women is that both the proponents of the reform as well as the opponents of the reform looked back to the ancient texts as the source from which both groups took their positions and invoked the sanctions of the *Shastras* in putting forward their arguments. This naturally necessitated a study of the position of women over the course of history. The deciding factor in the debate between the liberals or progressives, and the conservatives was the relative antiquity of the source from which they were quoting. The older the source the more authentic and authoritative it was considered. Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and R.G. Bhandarkar, all quoted copiously from the Sanskrit sources in order to attack the conservatives. There is thus a direct correlation between the concerns of the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Prarthana Samaj and the writings on the position of women in Hindu civilization.

Since the traditional work on the status of women in India exists entirely within the context of Hinduism it is heavily pre-occupied with religious and legal questions such as the right to widow remarriage, the existence of the institution of *Niyoga*, the right to property for women, the origin and development of the institution of *Stridhana*, the right of the childless widow to adopt and so on. On the religious front there is an obsession with the right of a woman to perform religious sacrifices either by herself or with her husband, as also with her interest and involvement with the pursuit of religious goals. The social position of women is usually concerned with the inclusion or exclusion of women in public assemblies and their right to education. On the whole the perspective on women is confined to seeing them within the context of the family. It is the status of women *within* the family, and primarily in the relationship of wives to husbands with which the traditional writers were concerned.

Another feature of the traditional writing on the position of women is that they were based entirely on brahmanical sources. Even if these sources are considered to be reasonably authentic, which I have reason to doubt, they carry the problem of (a) an inherent bias of the *brahmanas*, (b) reflecting the precepts of the *brahmanas* rather than the actual practice of the people, and (c) confining themselves to the upper castes. At best the existing work can be termed as a partial view from above. How unsatisfactory such unconditional reliance upon brahmanical sources has been will be clear further on in this paper.

The analysis of the position of women in ancient India has also been coloured by the fact that almost all the works have been written by

scholars who would fall within the nationalist school of history. Writing at a time when Hindu social institutions were being subjected to fierce criticism by a generation that was imbibing western education and western values, these scholars worked hard to show that the position of women had been high in the ancient past. The contemporary evils reflecting the low position of women were responsible for the Hindu sense of inferiority in relation to their ruling masters. As a reaction Hindu scholars argued that the evils were only a temporary aberration and could easily be eliminated. The general thrust of the work has therefore been to demonstrate that the status of women was very high in the Vedic period, according to this view there was a general decline afterwards, reaching rock bottom with the coming of the invaders, especially the Muslims, who abducted Hindu women and violated them, and these circumstances resulted in the development of such evils as *Purdah*, *Sati* and female infanticide. This view has become widely prevalent since it appears regularly in popular literature and vernacular journals but we must point out that it is only an extension of traditional academic research.

Here is a fairly representative example from the pen of a woman scholar

The tenth and the eleventh centuries saw the advent, and later, the firm establishment of Muhammadans in this country. When Hindu culture came into clash with a culture far different from its own the leaders of society began to frame rules and laws to safeguard their interest—specially the position of women. Rigorous restrictions were placed on them. We find at this stage child marriage firmly enforced. The death of a widow was preferred to her falling into evil hands. Hence self-immolation of a widow was enjoined by the law codes giving the unfortunate victim the hope of heavenly bliss. Such and several other customs were introduced which curbed the freedom of women to a very large extent. This was done perhaps to save her from the foreigners and to preserve the purity of the race.¹

Similarly, R C Dutt, the well-known nationalist historian and the first to present a coherent account of ancient Indian civilization and of women, writes

Absolute seclusion and restraint (of women) were not Hindu customs. They were unknown in India till Mohammedan times. No ancient nation held their women in higher honour than the Hindus.²

Such a sweeping view is untenable if one looks at the past without the tinted spectacles of the present. Even if one were to confine oneself to Brahmanical sources, there is enough evidence to show that women of

the upper castes did not have access to the public domain by the early centuries of the Christian era, and that Manu and other law givers recommended early marriage for girls. *Sati* itself was associated with women of the ruling classes, as is evident from the seventh century account of Harsha's early career. The structure of institutions that ensured the subordination of women was complete in *all essentials* long before the Muslims as a religious community had come into being. The Muslim bogey was a convenient peg to explain the origin of all oppressive practices. It was particularly convenient for those who did not wish to see the structural framework of institutions that governed gender relations in early India mainly because it was the same framework that governed women even in contemporary society. The term 'patriarchy' was hardly used and even when it did stray into an occasional historian's writing it was a neutral term, completely divested of the power factor inherent in it, successfully depoliticized thus it lost its real import.

The cultural encounter between England and India in the nineteenth century, which was the context for the emergence of nationalist historiography, shaped the focus and the thrust of writing on women in early India. The injury to the Hindu sense of superiority resulting from the unfavourable comparison between Hindu women and western women, which was common throughout the cultural encounter, was so marked that it led frequently to an inversion of the Vincent Smith syndrome. Vincent Smith's position was a general contempt for everything Indian. If he was faced with visual and incontrovertible proof of something worthwhile in Indian culture he would immediately attribute it to Greek influence. Historians writing on the position of women in ancient India reversed the argument by invariably trying to point out that nowhere else in the ancient world were women held in such high regard as in the India of 3000 years ago. They specially revelled in comparisons with Greece and Rome as in the passage below.

The historian of India who has studied the literature of the ancient Hindus will have no hesitation in asserting that never in the most polished days of Greece and Rome were women held in such high regard in those countries as in India three thousand years ago.³

Similarly Altekari surveys the condition of women in ancient Greece, Rome, and Palestine, and then reiterates that the position which women occupied at the dawn of civilization during the Vedic age was much better.⁴

The need of the nationalist historians to resurrect examples of the lost glory of Indian womanhood has led to a selective focus on certain aspects of the ancient texts. This has often resulted in a sanitized interpretation of events, best illustrated by the nationalist rendering of

the Gargi-Yajnavalkya debate, the most celebrated example of women's learning. The highlight of the account in Shakuntala Rao Shastri's book is the way the debate concludes. Gargi's questions to Yajnavalkya have by this time become more subtle and pointed. Yajnavalkya however clearly has no intention of allowing Gargi to win the prize of a thousand cows. At this stage of the debate he arbitrarily threatens Gargi with dire consequences if she persists in questioning him and so eliminates her from the contest. Despite this Shakuntala Rao Shastri sums up the episode *without* pointing to the unfairness of this clearly memorable confrontation between two philosophers, one a man and the other a woman. Instead she blithely states.

The persistent and obstinate enquiry of a woman brought forth the finest definition of the Supreme Reality. The motive of Gargi's enquiry was *not to test Yajnavalkya but to learn from him* [italics mine] about the nature of Brahman.⁵

Thus Gargi's fearlessness, independent mind, and her ability to take on a well established philosopher, is watered down in Rao Shastri's account, more importantly the unfairness of the contest is glossed over in order to present a picture of blissful, harmonious pursuit of philosophical truth.

The best known and most internally coherent nationalist work on women is Altekhar's study on the position of women in Hindu civilization. His work is based primarily on Brahmanical sources and outlines the position of women from earliest times right up to the mid-fifties of this century when the Hindu Code Bill was under consideration. Altekhar's work represents the best that is available to us by way of women's studies in history but it also shows up very sharply the limitations of the traditional approach. Although the work unravels in detail the entire body of opinion of the law makers on such areas as the education of women, marriage and divorce, the position of the widow, women in public life, proprietary rights of women, and the general position of women in society, it is steeped in the nationalist understanding of the women's question. Further his overwhelming concern is with women in the context of the family and one almost gets the feeling that the status of women needs to be raised in order to ensure the healthy development of the future race of India. In this he was reflecting the opinion of nationalist writers from the second half of the nineteenth century who placed tremendous importance on the physical regeneration of the Hindus.

A survey of Altekhar's work will indicate the limitations inherent in his approach. His theoretical framework is spelt out in the very first page of his work. According to him.

One of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilization and to appreciate its excellence and realize its limitations is to study

the history of the position and status of women in it . The marriage laws and customs enable us to realize whether men regarded women as market commodities or war prizes or whether they realized that the wife is after all her husband's valued partner whose co-operation was indispensable for *happiness* and *success* in family life [italics mine].⁶

Altekar's own genuine commitment to reforming women's status led him to sometimes making quaint statements which he intended as positive and progressive. Thus he suggests that although

- ' Women have low fighting value they have potential military value. By giving birth to sons they contribute indirectly to the fighting strength and efficiency of their community'⁷

Further, Altekar's programme for women, despite his apparent liberality and sympathy for them, was to view women primarily as stock-breeders of a strong race. This view is particularly noticeable in his suggestions about women's education. In Altekar's programme of reform women were to be educated enough but in doing so one had to ensure that no undue strain was placed upon them. He expressed his fears thus:

As things stand today girls have to pass the *same* examinations as boys and to learn house-keeping at home as well, all the while having less physical strength than their brothers. This certainly puts too much strain upon them and is *injurious to the future well-being of the race* [italics mine]⁸

Establishing the high status of women was the means by which 'Hindu' civilization could be vindicated. This was the finished version of the nationalist answer to James Mill's denigration of Hindu civilization published a century ago, the locus of the barbarity of Hindu civilization in James Mill's work (*A History of British India*) had lain in the abject condition of Hindu women. By reversing the picture Altekar was attempting to lay Mill's ghost aside. But it was easier to provide a general picture than to deal with a variety of customs oppressing women that still obtained in the early twentieth century. Altekar was thus forced to provide explanations for existing biases against women. For example he attempts to explain the Hindu preference for a son over a daughter by advancing a psychological argument as in the passage below.

If a cruel fate inflicted widowhood upon the daughter, the calamity would break the parent's heart. Remarriage being no longer possible parents had to see the heart-rending pain of seeing their daughter wasting herself in interminable widowhood .

parents had often to pass through the terrible ordeal of seeing their daughters burning themselves alive on the funeral pyre of their husbands. To become a daughter's parent thus became a source of endless worry and misery. As a natural consequence passages about the undesirability of the birth of daughter become more numerous.⁹

Altekar is particularly weak in his attempts at relating the status of women at a given point of time with social organization as a whole. Thus early Vedic society which did not as yet have noticeable concentration of power, or a well developed institution of kingship, is the context for Altekar's unnecessary explanation for the absence of queens. Since Altekar is convinced about the high status of women in the Vedic period he feels he has to account for why we do not hear of women as queens. Thus he is constrained to suggest that,

Aryans were gradually establishing their rule in a foreign country surrounded on all sides by an indigenous hostile population that considerably outnumbered them. Under such circumstances queens ruling in their own rights or as regents were *naturally unknown* [italics mine] ¹⁰

Similarly Altekar has a facile explanation for why women did not own property. According to him,

Landed property could be owned only by one who had the power to defend it against actual or potential rivals and enemies. Women were obviously unable to do this and so could hold no property ¹¹

In his inability to see women within a specific social organization and recognizing patriarchal subordination of women Altekar was not unique. Like others he was reflecting a deeply internalized belief in biological determinism and therefore in the physical inferiority of women.

Very occasionally however Altekar shows flashes of insight into the socio-economic context within which women's subordination was achieved. For example in his analysis of the causes for the 'fall' of the status of the Aryan women Altekar suggests a connection with the subjugation of the Sudras as a whole. He argues that the Aryan conquest of the indigenous population and its loose incorporation as members of a separate *varna* had given rise to a huge population of semi-servile status. In such a situation Aryan women ceased to be producing members of society and thus lost the esteem of society. But even as he makes this broadly contextual explanation Altekar is insensitive to the crucial distinction between the participation of women as producers and participation in terms of *controlling production*. Thereafter Altekar's semi-historical insight is

unfortunately lost and popular prejudice takes over. Like the ancient Brahmanical law givers he appears to have a horror of Sudra women, as in this passage:

The introduction of the non-Aryan wife into the Aryan household is the *key* [italics mine] to the gradual deterioration of the position of women. . . The non-Aryan wife with her ignorance of Sanskrit language and Hindu religion *could obviously not enjoy the same religious privileges as the Aryan consort* [italics mine]. Association with her must have tended to affect the purity of speech of the Aryan co-wife as well. Very often the non-Aryan wife may have been the favourite one of her husband, who may have often attempted to associate her with his religious sacrifices in preference to her better educated but less loved Aryan co-wife. This must have naturally led to grave mistakes and anomalies in the performance of the ritual which must have shocked the orthodox priests . . . Eventually it was felt that the object could be gained by declaring the whole class of women to be ineligible for Vedic studies and religious duties¹²

This facile argument was, in Altekar's view, the key factor in the decline of the status of women. Altekar is completely obtuse to other historical explanations. The possibility that the Sudra woman, whom he regards as a threat, could have contributed to a more dynamic and active kind of womanhood for Hindu society would not even occur to Altekar because his focus is on Aryan women (regarded then as the progenitors of the upper caste women of Hindu society) and in his racist view Sudra women counted for nothing. The most important consequence of Altekar's limited repertoire of biological and psychological explanations was that the logic of the distorted social relations between men and women is completely obscured. The kind of explanations offered by Altekar might appear to be astoundingly trivial to us today but it is important to remember that, by and large, nationalist historians were content to restrict historical explanations to cultural factors while writing about ancient India. This was in contrast to their focus on economic and social factors while discussing British rule in India.

In summing up nationalist historiography on women in early India we might draw attention to the fact that the Altekarian paradigm, though limiting and biased, continues to nevertheless influence and even dominate historical writing. In essence what emerges from the mass of detail he accumulated is the construction of a picture of the idyllic condition of women in the Vedic age. It is a picture which now pervades the collective consciousness of the upper castes in India and has virtually crippled the emergence of a more analytically rigorous study of gender relations in ancient India. There is thus an urgent need to move forward and rewrite history, a history that does justice to

women by examining social processes, and the structures they create, thus crucially shaping and conditioning the relations between men and women. Just as Altekar displaced Mill in his work, it is time we realized that despite Altekar's substantial contribution we must lay his ghost aside and begin afresh.

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NOTE

P

Negotiating Totalities: Towards an Analysis of Popular Magazine Fiction

The investigation of cultural forms has significant implications for the development of critical sociology since it allows us to raise issues of ideology by linking cultural 'objects' with societal discourses. My attempt, in this article, is to focus on popular magazine fiction as a cultural form, that is, as a cultural and ideologically specific world, involved in negotiations over social meanings.¹ I also suggest that the part conventionally assumed to be played by popular fiction in cultural reproduction is not self-evident. Rather, popular magazine fiction must be approached as fielding contested social meanings, as both 'an arena of consent and resistance'² to structures of dominance.

In this essentially programmatic account, I wish to draw attention to the implications of investigating popular magazine fiction in terms of its links with the production and reproduction of social realities. How, then, we must ask, should one pursue the specificity and effectiveness of the 'world' of magazine fiction? Why do these narratives make such compelling reading? What are the socially significant claims of this 'world' and what are its institutional locations? How does one read its textures? By what filtering process does 'reality' come to be selected and 'represented'? What are the socio-cultural assumptions running through the narratives? How does one undertake a critical reading of cultural forms, simultaneously reading along and against the grain? Can such a strategic reading be charged with attributing significations unperceived by readers? How, in other words, does one tread the ground between the immediacies of 'experience-near' concepts and the abstractions of 'experience-distant' concepts?³

The first step towards answering these questions would lie in conceptualizing popular magazine fiction as a discursive field, a space where cultural contradictions are aired, negotiated and disposed of. Its attempts to pose and suggest solutions to the problems of social life are not necessarily coherent, but are contestable. This also implies that its meaning is not an inherent quality (to be discovered in the text), but is processually constituted through the text's encounter with other ongoing social discourses. Consequently, interpretations will differ according to the cultural codes brought to bear by readers and according

to the socio-historical conjunctures which render them meaningful⁴ It is possible to approach magazine fiction as a unique ideological configuration, both constituting the terms of the social world and offering ways of engaging with it

Yet, speaking of this fictional world involves a paradox—what may be termed the paradox of fictionality—which is articulated by its dual projection as both 'natural' and as 'artifice'. It is through this duality that we could trace the ideological core of magazine fiction. Only in the context of the effects of such a fictional world, determined in conjunction with material social practices, can we speak of its social function. By approaching this cultural form as a realm of negotiated meaning, it is possible to gain some sense of the nature of a society, especially by problematizing the fundamental assumptions on which interaction is built within particular communities. This process of 'negotiation' does not necessarily culminate in the establishment of a consensual value system. Rather, we must draw attention to the power context (defined by specific configurations of gender, caste and class) of the negotiation process and the consequent 'preferring' of a world-view which feeds into the dominant cultural order. The articulations of magazine fiction must be read as significant statements about the contradictory pressures inhering in the cultural sphere and the 'regularizing processes' muffling these tensions. At another level, by exploring the ways in which patterns in magazine fiction serve to reinforce/disrupt and hence intervene in subjects' perceptions, my attempt is also to suggest the uses to which such narratives are put.

In order to clear a space for the focus on popular fiction, it is inevitable that we proceed by critiquing the established literary canon. It has often been recognized that Literature is a constituted tradition, defined by certain literary/aesthetic norms.⁵ This invented tradition guards its boundaries by excluding certain cultural forms like popular fiction. The very act of raising popular fiction as a potential field of study has the effect of not only questioning and redefining the social ideologies shaping the literary canon, but also opens up for debate the culture-ideology nexus.

In spite of Cultural Studies making 'lived ideology' its focal concern, an adequate delineation of what 'popular culture' means has yet to emerge.⁶ I here draw attention to the vacillation of meaning between popular culture in the sense of folk culture, and in the sense of a homogenized mass culture industry. But neither of these can wholly account for the textures of popular magazine fiction. Indeed, it is necessary to break out of these closures by shifting back and forth, from an understanding of magazine fiction as 'formulaic'⁷ to relating it to magazine policies (dictated by the culture industry?), via a recognition of historical conjunctures like the increase in literacy and leisure of the middle classes.

Against this backdrop, and basing the observations on my reading of magazine fiction in Kannada over the last two years, I will now seek to

describe some broad thematic threads that constitute this popular discourse. Though magazine fiction, like all forms of popular culture, is described as formulaic, fantastic or even escapist fare, it is necessary to introduce a disclaimer. In spite of its minimum social involvement and almost simplistic moral contrasts, it is clear that magazine fiction is participating in a public discourse, 'representing' the social order in particular ways. It would be more useful to perceive this discourse as operating with two parallel paradigms: on the one hand, articulating and reinforcing specific values and, on the other, criticizing the resultant social arrangements. Put differently, though these textual discourses emerge from within a determinate ideological field, the ways in which this ideology is worked draws out the conflicts immanent to the texts. Alternatively, the definitive dynamics of the reading process cannot also be bypassed. My engagement with magazine fiction gauges the experience of reading—as a woman/social scientist—in complicity with the narrative, yet wary of its wiles: this produces a reflexivity which can reveal (and disrupt) narratives as locales where a coherent identity and consciousness is forged. In other words, by exposing cracks in the narrative, it helps bring to the surface the refracted cultural conflicts being played out through textual discourses.

The popular discourse embodied by magazine fiction does not represent a prior reality, but is a production which ongoingly elaborates its 'object of knowledge'.⁸ Consequently, it must be iterated that the stories will be read not as particular texts by specific authors, but as narratives embedded in a cultural context, as suffused with the logic of the enveloping cultural whole. Most of the narratives are realistic accounts of daily struggles, permitting easy recognition, if not identification, with situations and characters. Working on real social anxieties and suggesting ways out, these narratives also embody an unacknowledged criticism of the run of daily life.

However, an account of these narratives must be preceded by an identification of their thematic rhythms, which may be set out in terms of key codes structuring the texts—like the opposition between city and village, modernity and tradition, public and private, and so on. This also offers us a specific image of the social totality through which we may sight splinters of historical reality. The backdrop is that of a society caught in the throes of change, pulled out of shape by the deep-seated conflicts between traditional and modern values. From amidst the ravages of this conflict emerges another scenario, marked by the expansion of a cash nexus, modernization and an increasingly coherent individualism. The growing commercialism is seen reflected in the spheres of work and marriage. Power structures tend to coagulate around gender and class.

Following from this, two interweaving thematic strands may be traced in the popular narrative. One current eddies around the process of modernization, its manifestations and effects. The other explores 'the lack of, search for and redemption of marriage relationships', in

the course of explicating gender relationships and offering specific constructions of femininity

The most tangible dimensions presenting themselves through a discourse on modernization are an inchoate individualism emerging into a predominantly commercialized world, this ethic also provides the categories with which individuals initiate a 'battle between genders', questioning the divide between domestic and public, between work and home. The search-for-one's-roots theme may be seen as another manifestation of the alienating consequences of modernization.

Tracking down a nascent individualism through popular narratives would be meaningful only when its emergence is located spatially and temporally. Resisting the habit of treating individualism as a universal human trait, one must read through the narratives to historicize the growth and consolidation of this ethic against, firstly, the loosening hold of traditional structures (like the control wielded by the family and/or village), and, secondly, the rise of modern commercialism (which promotes an equation between work and success). But what is revealing in the popular discourse is that the question of individual 'identity'—an offshoot of individualist morality—is bound up with the recognition of ever-changing power nodes in society. Modernization is seen as the breaking down of all recognizable power structures and traditional sources of authority, simultaneously, power metamorphoses into new forms, encompassing and rendering asymmetrical, personal relationships, social interaction, knowledge, and so on. A person's inability to respond to such 'intangible' power structures is experienced in terms of a loss of 'individual identity' and efforts are directed toward salvaging that lost whole. Perhaps the fascination of these narratives lies in their promise of transcendence, where the cracks of one's divided self disappear and a powerless subject is transformed into a 'real' individual?

In the narratives, the division of social space into 'domestic' and 'public' constitutes the assumed rationale for gender boundaries, with women being identified conventionally with the 'home' or private domain and men with the public world. These reigning paradigms of the discourse on sexuality are challenged by modern developments seeking to redraw the lines between the public and the private. The contradictions inherent in this situation make way for a dispute over sex roles and the traditional division of labour in and outside the home. However, this questioning does not resolve itself into a redefinition of conventional gender roles and expectations. Underplaying the painful compromises demanded of a woman in such circumstances, the narrative finds an alternative hope in her increased efficiency (a product of privileged education and employment) which assure her a place in an increasingly achievement-oriented world.

The ambience of commercialism encapsulating contemporary existence is also recognized, albeit indirectly, in these narratives. By juxtaposing a stratified and orderly social world with the criminal

world, the underlying common desires for money, security and power are revealed. Most striking by their absence here are the moral/legal definitions of crime as illegitimate/deviant behaviour. There is no attempt to default the activities of the underworld because they are seen as responses to closures faced by upwardly mobile youngsters in an 'achieving' society. But, we must move a step further to ask what the blurred lines between legitimate and illegitimate means of acquiring wealth signifies. Is it a wholehearted endorsement of the 'achieving' ethic, or, by flouting the rules and norms, is it negating that very ethic? What do corruption, fraud and revenge mean, shorn of context? These narratives neither straightforwardly pose the issues nor resolve them, and are best seen as participating in a wider discourse regarding the 'conditions' of social existence. The meanings and interpretations one may cull from these representations are therefore not wholly definitive but reflect an ideological uncertainty.

By simultaneously speaking of marriage, employment and rampant corruption, the narrative also hints at the market morality seeping into all aspects of life. Marriage and employment, important indicators of one's status, take on a commercial twist in the modern world, where existence is rendered precarious unless one is prepared to buy one's security in the form of bribes or dowry.

Another theme examined is the fall-out of an encounter between 'tradition' and 'modernity', which is undoubtedly an existential problem in popular discourse. In tackling the corrosive impact of the city on the morals and values of villagers, the narratives register the changes in lifestyle (covering labour, attitudes, wealth and morals) initiated by technology. This encounter is also witness to the disintegration of property relations in a feudal society, where power connotes control over land and women, or, in other words, over fertility and reproduction. Erosion of this traditional way of life is seen as producing a moral seizure and impotence in the younger generation, blinded by the 'lure' of modernity. Technology, presented as a symbol of modernity, also becomes a metaphor for the degeneration of the social and moral fabric. We are confronted, therefore, with an involuted critique of modernity in the shape of, firstly, anxieties about modern technology, its disruptive influence and attendant morality, and, secondly, an unspecified celebration of tradition.

How does one further this critique of modernization? In the narratives, this takes the form of a search for one's roots, built around an implicit negation of the present. Paradoxically, despite the idealization of the 'pastoral' and the denigration of the urban realm, the search for a simple, homogenous community is recognized as a futile effort. Discontent with our ways of living and relating initiates the search for an alternative—an idyllic rural community. But what happens when the alternative itself has been corroded and displaced by modernizing influences? Popular discourse cannot cope with these deep-seated paradoxes, except in the extreme forms of empty

affirmation of tradition, or the advocacy of cultural modernization as inevitable and therefore acceptable. Does this acceptance and perpetuation of modernist values constitute a survival strategy and a mode of getting ahead?

The other thematic strand in the narratives of magazine fiction participates in a specific discourse on femininity, drawing on, and simultaneously constructing, the ideologies of domesticity, familialism and romantic love. Throughout, women are variously stereotyped as indecisive, emotional, spineless, maternal, dependent, caring, self-sacrificing, adulterous, jealous, scheming, constantly needing male protection (surveillance) and so on. Stemming from the intersections of these contradictory characterizations, the sphere of the domestic is itself rife with uncertainty: on the one hand, the domestic is equated with marriage and a promise of male protection, conferring security and respectability, besides legitimizing childbearing. On the other hand, the exclusive privacy of the women's sphere is itself seen as dangerous, where women become agents of adulterous relations, thereby transgressing monogamous ideals which are seen as the foundation of the social order. Juxtaposing these two readings, it could be shown how, by posing questions of morality independent of marital status, the discourse is mounting an attack against its own earlier construction of domesticity as a desirable virtue.

Yet another onslaught on the construction of 'romantic love' may be seen in the perception of marriage as a predominantly economic proposition, determined by the 'market indicators' of wealth and social class. More striking is the brushing aside of all veils, revealing marriages contracted and sustained solely for purposes of security and identity. Marriage is no longer seen by the woman as a romantic dream, constituted by love, but as a bitter reality necessitating constant 'submission', 'adjustment' or 'compromise'. However, in spite of undermining the genre of romantic narratives which hold up the promise of marital bliss, this undercurrent seemingly argues for the continuance of coercive marriage bonds. However, an explicit and strategic reasoning—that status, economic security, honour and legitimacy are routed through the male—underlies the decision to continue living with the husband, in spite of oppression. It is at such discursive junctures that we realize that discourses of family/marriage/sexuality are reproduced not so much due to false consciousness, or by the dissembling effects of ideology, but through the active (and strategic) consent of individuals.

The terrain of disputations we have traversed is suggestive of the implication of magazine fiction in fixing the parameters of popular discourse within which social issues are raised and resolved. By situating narratives within cultures, we can also investigate the manner in which cultural meaning is proposed and adjudicated within its boundaries. To analyse the attempt by magazine fiction to think and deal with specific cultural experiences, we must seek the cultural

categories that it takes for granted and the tactics it deploys in a world dominated by the demands of a practical rationality. Its culture-contingent nature prompts us to examine its hegemonic part in the production and reproduction of given social arrangements. The significance of such a study lies precisely in suggesting the ways in which magazine fiction mobilizes popular knowledge to think through contemporary social circumstances of Indian society, caught as it is in the nexus of 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 I thank Sashee Hegde for critical comments on this formulation
- 2 Stuart Hall, 1981, cited in J Caughie, 'Popular Culture: Notes and Revisions' in C. MacCabe (ed.), *High Theory/Low Culture*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1986
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BOOK REVIEW

Centre-State Financial Relations

I.S. Gulati and K.K. George, *Essays in Federal Financial Relations* (Centre for Development Studies Monograph Series), Oxford and IBH Pub. Co., pp. xiii + 172, Rs 82.

This book under review is a collection of essays written by Professors I.S. Gulati and K.K. George, individually or jointly, and published in *Economic and Political Weekly* over the last one decade. The first essay, by far the most comprehensive in this volume, is a historical and empirical analysis of the resource flows from the Centre to the states during 1951-52 to 1984-85, i.e., the period covering the first six five-year plans, and was originally written as their Memorandum to the Sarkaria Commission. The next three essays critically examine the awards of the sixth, seventh and eighth Finance Commissions. The fifth essay deals with the state-wise break-up of the three major categories of inter-state financial redistributions, viz., statutory transfers, plan transfers and discretionary transfers. The transfers effected through commercial banks, insurance companies and long-term financial institutions are explored in the sixth essay, and the last essay narrates the manner in which the Centre has built inroads into the state subjects during the post-independence period.

It is well known that the federal fiscal relations in India are constitutionally guaranteed. The authors argue that this constitutional guarantee has a colonial past and that it owes its origin to the Government of India Act, 1935 which, according to the authors, was enacted to 'strengthen the domination of the Centre in its relations with the provincial governments under colonial rule'. Those who are aware of the constitutional history of India would agree that the extreme centralization of the federal revenue and the total dependence of the provinces on the Centre for annual allotment of funds to discharge the day-to-day administrative functions started with the emergence of the East India Company. Subsequently, even though the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 recognized the necessity to earmark resources for the Centre and the provinces separately and had framed certain 'devolution rules', it was the Government of India Act,

1935, which provided the most clear cut demarcation of revenue sources between the Centre and the provinces as (i) exclusively federal, (ii) exclusively provincial, (iii) taxes levied by the federal government but shared with or assigned to the provinces, (iv) taxes levied by the federal government but collected and retained by the provinces, and (v) grants-in-aid from the federal government to those provincial governments which, in the opinion of the former, are in need of financial assistance. When the Constitution of India was framed after independence, according to the authors, the founding fathers of the Constitution virtually lifted these provisions and transplanted in it. Thus we have certain taxes and other imposts which are exclusively earmarked for the Centre. Articles 268, 270 and 272 of the Constitution catalogue the taxes which the Union will levy but the proceeds are shareable with or assignable to the states. Articles 275 and 282 provide for grants-in-aid.

In addition to these provisions, the Constitution imposes various limitations on the taxation powers of the states and stipulates that the President's prior permission has to be obtained to introduce taxes in which the states are interested. Even for raising loans within the state, advance sanction of the Centre is required. The commanding position of the Centre in federal finances was gradually strengthened by diverting resources away from the divisible pool on the one hand and by wielding absolute control over the capital raising institutions on the other. As a result of this, there has been a distinct deceleration in the financial receipts of the states. From the data available in various Reserve Bank of India reports, which are the only authentic and detailed source of information on federal finances, the authors estimate that the own revenue account receipts of the states as a proportion of the combined revenue account receipts of the Centre and the states was 44 per cent in the fifties, but the proportion declined to 37 per cent in the eighties. Similarly, the states' total capital account receipts of the Centre and the states declined from 55 per cent to 37 per cent during the same period.

It would be interesting to know how the Centre has been diverting the national resources away from the states. Take, for example, the divisible pool, convert the income tax paid by the companies into Corporation Tax which, in terms of Article 270 of the Constitution, need not be brought into the statutorily transferable divisible pool and shared between the Centre and the states. At the time of introducing this amendment, the revenue realized from corporation tax was not more than Rs 50 crore, an amount that was too little to attract the attention of the states, but in the eighties, income tax revenue has been recorded to be far less than the revenue from corporation tax. Secondly, instead of raising revenue from income tax, the Centre has been resorting to other means of resource mobilization like surcharge on income tax, special bearer bonds, compulsory deposit schemes etc., the revenue from which, as per the constitutional provisions, is not to be

shared with the states. Thirdly, instead of raising revenue from basic excise duty which is divisible, the Centre has been levying non-divisible excise duties, namely, special excise duty, auxiliary excise duty, etc., on certain commodities. Fourthly, the practice of raising administered prices of the goods produced by the public sector undertakings is yet another source of erosion of revenue from the divisible pool. Moreover, when the administered prices are raised the scope of raising excise duty becomes relatively limited because of the cumulative impact that these two might exert on price rise.

With the gradual erosion of revenue sources from the states, the Centre has not withdrawn any of the crucial responsibilities the Constitution has entrusted on them. Conversely, these responsibilities have enormously increased over the years, thereby increasing the requirement of additional financial resources. Almost all economic and social problems which directly or indirectly affect the people are earmarked in the Constitution for the states to tackle, for instance, problems of agriculture and rural development, public health, education, public distribution and price control, development of roads and road transport, generation and distribution of power, maintenance of law and order, and so on. Out of such crucial problems, those which find acceptance for inclusion in the state plan are eligible to receive Central assistance in the form of block loans and block grants, as determined by the Planning Commission. These transfers under the plan assistance, to quote the authors, 'have a high discretionary component'. Till the Fourth Plan, the Central plan assistance was related to the schemes in the state plans, and each scheme was individually cleared by the Planning Commission. With the introduction of the Gadgil formula for plan assistance, from the Fourth Plan onwards, the plan assistance was certainly become considerably less discretionary and more automatic. But the importance of the Gadgil formula has been progressively whittled down'.

The Gadgil formula which came into existence in 1968 for the state plan assistance by taking into account certain objective criteria like population, per capita income, per capita tax effort, outlay on continuing irrigation and power projects, and the special problems of the states, was modified in 1980. The block grant that goes to the states according to this formula is estimated to be 30 per cent of the total plan assistance from the Centre, the remaining 70 per cent being given as interest-bearing loan. The accumulated loan and the interest thereon have gone up so high that in recent years the fresh loans sanctioned by the Centre to some of the states are far less than what they have to repay to the Centre by way of the instalment of their loan and the interest. If the Centre so desires, that is, if its discretion so dictates, it can withhold the release due to a state under statutory transfers until the latter repays the whole dues.

There are occasions when the fiscal problems of the states are further aggravated by unexpected contingencies. The most often-quoted

example is the release of dearness allowance by the Central Government to its employees. Since dearness allowance is a device to protect the real value of income that is eroded by inflation, which affect the fixed income-earning workers and salaried the most, and when the Central Government compensates its employees for inflation by payment of additional dearness allowance, it is not possible for the state governments to withhold such payments from their employees. Given the existing constraints on funds, the state governments generally divert the amounts from other schemes for payment of additional dearness allowance. If the fund so diverted involve the schemes sponsored or financed by the Centre, the latter takes exception to it and sometimes orders for return of the amount or stops further release of funds. In order to avoid unnecessary tussles with the Centre, the states go for ways and means advances from Reserve Bank of India. The ways and means advances, which are limited to a given multiple of the minimum balance that the state is supposed to keep with the Reserve Bank of India, are repayable within 90 days and, if the limit is exceeded it becomes overdraft and should be paid within 7 days.

Even though most of the states have been resorting to overdrafts from the early fifties, it is only very recently that this has become one of the most sensitive issues in Centre-State financial relations. Though the authors do not support financial indiscipline by the states, they point out that there could be three major possible factors behind the states resorting to overdrafts, viz., (i) inflation eating into the statutory transfers, (ii) 'the debt trap' created by the Centre's policy of using loans as an instrument of resource transfers, and (iii) reduced share of the states in the total market loans raised by the Central and state governments.

Whatever be the pros and cons of the states incurring overdrafts, it may not be out of place to mention at least two points here. First, agreeing that overdrafts are not desirable for a healthy fiscal system, it is not known how the Centre can justify its own act of resorting to deficit financing of the order of Rs 20 crore per day, as complained by one of the state governments recently. Secondly, the rationale behind the stringent condition imposed by Reserve Bank of India on the states for repayment of overdrafts within seven days. Unlike the banking system in the country which is equipped with advanced ledger posting machines and computers, the transactions of the state governments are carried on through a large number of treasuries, sub-treasuries and branches of public sector banks. It is not possible for any state government to co-ordinate these accounts in such a short period. If Reserve Bank of India can extend the accounts reporting period of the commercial banks from the last Friday of the week to the last Friday of the month, i.e., from seven days to twenty-eight days, there is no reason why at least the same time span is not allowed for the states to clear their overdrafts.

Another major issue that is raised in this volume is the inter-state redistributive bias involved in what the authors call the budgetary transfers, that is, the statutory, the plan, and the discretionary transfers, which together constitute the gross devolution of funds from the Centre to the states. Though this is a relatively old essay which uses data for 1956-57 to 1976-77, the findings in it should still be of interest to those who are engaged in this area of research. Classifying the states into three groups as high income states, middle income states and low income states, the authors estimate the per capita transfers to 15 states during 1956-77 and find that, while the high income states as a group received budgetary transfers in per capita terms slightly higher than the average for all states, the receipts of the low income states as a group were below the all-India average transfers to all the states.

Apart from this, the essay entitled, 'Inter-State Redistribution Through Institutional Finance' argues that the flow of funds from the commercial banks and term lending institutions has been lower to the relatively small income group of states. This trend, to the extent that it holds good at present, has serious implications for regional growth. When the flow of public funds is biased in favour of the relatively richer states, the flow of private investments also should be in favour of these richer regions where the 'climate' of investment is expected to be more favourable to obtain higher marginal efficiency of capital than in the relatively poorer states. Further, since the taxable capacity of the richer states is higher they raise more internal resources and grow faster than the poorer states. The gulf between the richer and the poorer states thus remains wider. Unless the pattern of devolution is drastically altered, this condition would continue unchanged.

To conclude, it may be pertinent to mention that this book in many respects, as stated by Ashok Mitra in a very illuminating introduction to it, is path-breaking. Almost every aspect of the Centre-state financial relations finds expression in one or the other essay in this collection. The fact that the Sarkaria Commission report, which has recently become available, could not discuss any fresh issue in federal fiscalism other than what was already noted by the authors in their memorandum to the Commission speaks for itself the extent of their grasp on this vexed question. However, when one completes this book a doubt might brew in the mind whether the authors were not heavily biased in favour of the problems of the states. Of course, on introspection, that stand would appear inevitable. Yet another comment that comes to mind is about the editing of the book. When the publishers decide to conceal the authorship of each article separately and bring this out as a book of joint authorship, it would have been ideal for them to change the expressions appearing in some of the articles as 'I', 'in my view' etc. as 'we', 'in our view' etc. Despite this minor slippage, this collection has come out with all its elegance at a

very appropriate time when extensive debates on Centre-state financial relations are taking place in the context of the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission and the interim report of the Ninth Finance Commission

M RAGHAVAN

CHINA: ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT

Edited by
Ashok Mitra

During the past decade or so China has made adjustments in both the theory and practice of socialism while grappling with problems of developments. The consequences of these new experiments are still not clear to many and therefore a sense of bafflement persists in assessing their quality and content. The articles in this volume are in the nature of comments by a number of Indian social scientists on aspects of the recent socio-political and economic developments in China. Most of the contributors have visited China in the recent period. The list of contents given below gives an idea of the areas covered. Important data not easily available elsewhere are presented in support of arguments that are ideologically differentiated. The heterogeneity in impressions is perhaps inevitable given the nature of unfolding events in China. The volume is of value in that it presents a set of expert views on how China is doing today, the directions she is likely to take in the near future, and the problems she might have to encounter in that process.

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A 'Candidate Superpower' among the	
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Perestroika: The Revolution Resumed **B.P.R. Vithal** 3

Efficiency, Planning and Reforms in Socialist Economies
Some Theoretical Comments **Prabhat Patnaik** 31

Peasants and Industrialisation in the Soviet Union
Utsa Patnaik 46

Historicizing the Problems of Socialism
Amiya Kumar Bagchi 63

Note Comments on the Question of 'Historicizing the
Problems of Socialism' **C.P. Chandrasekhar** 69

Book Review 72

SOCIAL SCIENTIST

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1 A Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977

2 See R Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', *Journal of Comparative Economics*, December 1979, pp 325-45

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Editorial Note

The socialist world is in the midst of a major reform movement which is unparalleled both in its sweep as well as in its extent of geographical coverage. From Vietnam to Poland, profound changes are taking place in the mode of organisation of the economy and polity of socialist countries which are bound to have far-reaching consequences and which, understandably, have aroused keen debate. Some, notably bourgeois publicists, have seen in these changes the ultimate proof of the intrinsic unworkability of socialism, as a system *sui generis*, and are gleefully welcoming back into the fold of 'civilised', i.e. capitalist, nations, these errant countries which, according to them, are at last mending their ways. Socialist supporters of the reforms, on the other hand, see the changes as a bold new step forward along the path of socialism, a step that would make the system more vibrant than ever before. Still others, who also cherish in their hearts the socialist dream, are apprehensive that these particular reforms would deflect the socialist countries from their true course; would, instead of enabling them to transcend their current predicament, get them bogged down in a morass of unemployment, inflation and balance of payments difficulties, not to mention increasing economic inequalities across persons and regions.

No socialist, of course, can fail to be enthused by the greater openness of expression, the greater participation of the people, the greater freedom to voice discontent which the reforms have ushered in. The questions arise beyond this point are the economic reforms, entailing changes even in property relationships, a necessary complement to these reforms in the polity, or is their inexorable logic going to run counter eventually to the direction of the political reforms, either shifting greater popular political participation, or pushing such participation into the altogether undesirable channels of regionalism, local chauvinism, etc? Shouldn't economic restructuring in a socialist country bear a specifically socialist stamp, or is there no harm to socialism if its economic restructuring resembles in many respects the efforts that capitalist countries make in restructuring their economics? And above all, since whatever happens under socialism cannot be looked at in isolation from the activities of imperialism, what do these reforms entail for the struggle against imperialism? To raise

2 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

questions such as these must not be interpreted merely as an attempt to sit in judgement over the actions of socialist countries and parties. An objective assessment of the implications of what they are doing, a dialectical analysis of the course they have begun to pursue, is crucial for our own struggle, this alone can give us the self-clarification that would enable us to move forward.

To discuss these questions which are uppermost in the minds of socialists all over the world, *Social Scientist* had organised a three-day workshop in Delhi in March. To be sure, in India our knowledge of what is going on in the socialist countries is unfortunately limited. But the basic premise behind the workshop was that the discussion of these issues cannot simply await greater information. We have to make do with what we have, otherwise we would be waiting for ever. We can change our minds in the light of new information and new developments, but we cannot keep our minds blank.

We would like to bring to our readers the papers presented at that workshop, as well as the written comments of some of the discussants. The current number of *Social Scientist* carries the first instalment of the papers presented at the workshop. Subsequent issues will carry the remaining papers and comments. We hope these papers will bring to the readers a whiff of the stimulating atmosphere which prevailed at the workshop.

The workshop was dedicated to the memory of Muzaffar Ahmed, an outstanding communist, a pioneer of the communist movement in India, and an accused in the famous Meerut conspiracy case, whose centenary is being celebrated this year. The current number of *Social Scientist* is also dedicated to his memory.

B P R VITHAL*

Perestroika: The Revolution Resumed

INTRODUCTION

The most important documents available so far which would help us understand perestroika (using this word in the sense of a revolution, as defined by Gorbachev, and not in its narrow sense of re-structuring) are

1. The book, *Perestroika*, by Mikhail Gorbachev, published in the West (Collins) (referred to hereafter as the Book);
2. The report by Gorbachev to the Festive meeting on the 70th anniversary of the Great October Revolution on November 2, 1987 (referred to hereafter as the *87 Report*),
3. The report by Gorbachev to the 19th All Union Conference of the CPSU in June 88 (referred to hereafter as the *88 Report*), and
4. *The Challenge: Economics of Perestroika*, Abel Aganbegyan, (Paperback, Hutchinson)

That Gorbachev's book has obviously been written for a western audience is evident both from the manner in which the subject is treated and from the fact that, for the first time, we have a Russian publication which is extremely well written and is a pleasure to read. Indeed it makes one wonder whether it is a translation from a Russian original or was, in fact, written in English itself. On the other hand the more important formulations of different theoretical positions are contained in the other two documents. A comparison of the three is interesting in some cases to show the nuances that Gorbachev adopts to make his position attractive to a western audience, as also to show the evolution of some ideas. Aganbegyan's book has been referred to only with reference to certain issues of economic restructuring.

This paper is intended to serve three purposes. One is to give the more important ideas and policies that are the basis of perestroika. For this purpose somewhat extensive quotations are given from all the sources mentioned above so that the paper can be read without immedi-

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ate reference to these sources. Second, is to draw attention to some of the ideas that may appear to be controversial, but without much comment or analysis so that one may come to one's own conclusion in regard to these. Thirdly, to point out, in the case of a few basic propositions, the philosophy behind them and their likely consequences taking one particular point of view. Naturally, this being only one point of view it would be debatable.

Gorbachev defines perestroika as a revolution—'A decisive acceleration of the socio-economic and cultural development of Soviet society which involves radical changes on the way to a qualitatively new State.'¹ He concedes that 'we don't equate perestroika with the October revolution, an event that was a turning point in the thousand-year history of our State and is unparalleled in force of impact on mankind's development'. He sees the task of this revolution as being that of imparting 'new dynamism to the October revolution's historical impulse and further advance all that was commenced by it in our society'. He quite pertinently points out that, if the bourgeois revolutions in France in 1789 and in Britain in 1649 could be followed by successive revolutions to consolidate the achievements of the first revolution, there is nothing unusual in a second revolution being necessary to consolidate the achievements of the first one, in the case of the socialist revolution. A question can, of course, be raised that, in the case of bourgeois revolutions subsequent revolutions may have been necessary because one class was consolidating its position against others, whereas if the communist revolutions had resulted in the abolition of classes then what makes a second revolution necessary? If it is contended that even the communist revolution had not succeeded in abolishing classes, then a whole set of other questions would arise as to what are the classes that are persisting and which class is conducting this revolution against which other class? We shall revert to these questions later in this paper.

Perestroika can be divided into four broad aspects. I. A re-assessment of the past; II. Perestroika in the literal sense of re-structuring of the economy of the Soviet Union; III. Glasnost, which again is a term that stands for the entire process of democratization of the Soviet polity and State; and IV. Socialism and the World. We can discuss each of these aspects separately before we take a view of the overall picture that emerges.

Re-Assessment of the Past

This term can be used as an euphemism for a re-assessment of Stalin. But, to consider it so would be a mistake because there is more to the past of the Soviet Union, covering the period 1917-1987, than merely Stalin. However, the most important part of this assessment is no doubt a re-assessment of Stalin. In the book, *Perestroika*, Stalin is mentioned only once and that in what may be called, a very restrained manner.

The emphasis on strict centralization, administration by injunction, and the existence of a great number of administrative institutions and restrictions belittled the role of law. At some stage this led to arbitrary rule and the reign of lawlessness which had nothing to do with the principles of socialism or the provisions of the 1936 Constitution. Stalin and his close associates are responsible for those methods of governing the country. Any attempts to justify that lawlessness by political needs, international tension or alleged exacerbation of class struggle in the country are wrong. Violations of law had tragic consequences which we still cannot forget or forgive. The 20th Party Congress made a very harsh assessment of that period.²

A more detailed assessment is made in the *Report* of November 1987. In that report it is stated that

There is now much discussion about the role of Stalin in our history. His was an extremely contradictory personality. To remain faithful to historical truth, we have to see both Stalin's incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism, to the defence of its gains, the gross political errors, and the abuses committed by him and by those around him, for which our people paid a heavy price and which had grave consequences for the life of our society.³

What is the assessment in this report of Stalin's positive and negative aspects? On the positive side, the line that Stalin took after Lenin's passing away is examined with reference to the line taken by Trotsky on the one hand and Bukharin on the other. The 87 Report points out that Trotsky's ideas were contrary to those of Lenin and that Trotsky 'always vacillated and cheated',⁴ and 'negated the possibility of building socialism in conditions of capitalist encirclement'.⁵ The report also says that the stand taken by Bukharin and his followers was also mistaken and they 'soon admitted their mistakes' and that 'his theoretical views can be classified as fully Marxist only with great reserve'.⁶ The conclusion in this report is, therefore, that 'if we wish to be faithful to history and the truth of life there can be only one answer. no other course could be taken'.⁷ 'The Party's leading nucleus headed by Joseph Stalin had safeguarded Leninism in a ideological struggle'.⁸

On the negative side it will suffice if we mention three aspects which are generally identified as the major negative aspects of Stalin. One is his wrong assessment of the role of the middle peasant and the tremendous human suffering that the collectivization of agriculture imposed as a result of this wrong assessment. This is pointed out in the 87 Report but, even while drawing attention to the excesses, the final

view is that 'if we assess the significance of collectivization as a whole in consolidating socialism in the countryside, it was in the final analysis a transformation of fundamental importance'⁹ The second aspect is in regard to his having weakened the Soviet army by liquidating a large portion of the top command. Here again there is evidence to show that, perhaps, the Soviet Union had indeed been weakened by the policies followed between 1936-39 but, once the blow fell, the position changed and Gorbachev's own assessment of Stalin's contribution to the war is, 'A factor in the achievement of victory (in the Second World War—author) was the tremendous political will, purposefulness and persistence, ability to organize and discipline people, displayed in the war years by Joseph Stalin'.¹⁰

The third aspect is in regard to the manner in which dissent was dealt with and how loyal party leaders were liquidated. On this aspect the 87 Report says, 'It is sometimes said that Stalin did not know of many instances of lawlessness. Documents at our disposal show that this is not so. The guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage before the Party and the people for the wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness is enormous and unforgivable. This is a lesson for all generations . . .'¹¹ This is one aspect on which it is difficult to say much in defence of Stalin. Here it is perhaps true that there was, in his personality, some paranoid streak of suspicion and insecurity that must have got sharpened as he became isolated in his position of eminence and that resulted in tragic human consequences. At one level the lesson would be that we have to be careful about the psychology of those we allow to rise to positions of power.

To understand the Stalin phenomenon, what we need is not more biographical details of Stalin but an explanation of the social circumstances in Russia which allowed this phenomenon to arise and to thrive. There is the view that the Stalin phenomenon was an inevitable consequence of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Lenin's concept of the role of the Communist Party. There is the other view that Stalin was a uniquely Russian phenomenon; that it was the emergence of a socialist state in an almost pre-capitalist, feudal society like that of Russia in 1917, that gave rise to this distortion. Then there is the third view, that it is some paranoid streak in Stalin's personality that was responsible for its more malignant aspects. There is an element of truth in all these three views. In the 87 Report Gorbachev takes the view that 'contrary to the assertions of our ideological opponents the Stalin personality cult was certainly not inevitable. It was alien to the nature of socialism, represented a departure from its fundamental principles, and, therefore, has no justification'.¹² Yet, as mentioned above, it is admitted that the 'party's leading nucleus headed by Joseph Stalin had safeguarded Leninism in the ideological struggle'.

There is, therefore, a dilemma here for the Party posed by the contradiction between Stalin's correct ideological line (at one, albeit,

critical stage) and his warped personality. On January 4, 1923, less than a year after Stalin's appointment as General Secretary of the Party, Lenin suggested to his Central Committee colleagues that they should 'think about a way of removing Stalin from that post' It is interesting that 'Stalin, having learned about Lenin's letter, even tried to hand in his resignation' and it was the members of the Central Committee and delegates to the 13th Party Congress (May 1924) who 'proved inconsistent on that issue'.¹³ The party does not seem to have had the strength to control the effects of the distortion in Stalin's personality before it itself was decapitated by him. It is almost as if in Julius Caesar we had Hamlet in place of noble Brutus

Other documents are also nowadays being published in the Soviet Union. We need not go into these because, for us in this country, there is nothing new that the Russians can tell us about Stalin Whatever there was to be known about him that was significant was already known outside the Soviet Union. It is a different matter if some people chose either not to know these facts or not to believe them on considerations of faith On the other hand, for the Russians themselves, an intensive discussion of the Stalin phenomenon has become necessary, partly because they did not have access to all the facts so far and partly because of, what may be called, therapeutic reasons. As the 87 Report puts it, 'a truthful analysis must help us to solve today's problem'. An honest understanding will provide real moral guidelines for the future.'¹⁴ The Russian people need to be shaken out of economic and intellectual stagnation. Enterprise, initiative, drive and dynamism have to be inculcated and encouraged In doing this a traumatic catharsis sometimes helps If an image that so far represented all that was best is suddenly transformed into, or shown to be, all that is evil, the consequent trauma can shatter the old mould that constrained the patterns of thought and behaviour and release the latent intellectual and emotional forces It is a social exorcism which may be necessary for the Russian people but is entirely unnecessary for us This swing, from considering one person as the embodiment of all that is good, to considering the same person as the source of all evil, is again more in the Christian tradition of God and Satan, a kind of Manichaeism Our tradition has always allowed for shades of grey Even our *avatars* are shown to have indulged in actions of doubtful motivation to illustrate the nature of the human predicament or as Mao did we can score him on a 1 to 100 scale' For those who wish to embarrass the Communists it may be a good talking point but one fails to see what its relevance is beyond this Given the political system and the historical context of our country, this phenomenon has not even cautionary significance for us

Perestroika As Economic Restructuring

This brings us to the main issue of perestroika viz. restructuring of the economic system The need for this arises because of the situation of

stagnation in the Soviet Union that Gorbachev describes in his book as follows.

At some stage—this became particularly clear in the latter half of the seventies—something happened that was at first sight inexplicable. The country began to lose momentum. Economic failures became more frequent. Difficulties began to accumulate and deteriorate, and unresolved problems to multiply. Elements of what we call stagnation and other phenomena alien to socialism began to appear in the life of society. A kind of 'braking mechanism' affecting social and economic development formed. And all this happened at a time when the scientific and technological revolution opened up new prospects for economic and social progress.

Analysing the situation, we first discovered a slowing of economic growth. In the last fifteen years the national income growth rates had declined by more than a half and by the beginning of the eighties had fallen to a level close to economic stagnation. A country that was once quickly closing in on the world's advanced nations began to lose one position after another.¹⁵

The reasons for this situation are analysed in greater depth in the book by Abel Aganbegyan. It is not the intention of the present paper to review that book, however, some of these issues cannot be clarified without referring to it. From Aganbegyan's book it can be seen that the two main objective factors that necessitated a revolutionary restructuring of the economic system are: (a) the constraint of natural resources that is beginning to be felt, and (b) the change in the demography of the Soviet Union which compels reliance hereafter on increasing labour productivity. The earlier method adopted which, Aganbegyan calls the Extensive Method, worked so long as natural resources were freely available and there was no constraint on labour supply. It would appear that despite its bountiful endowment of natural resources the Soviet Union has now reached a stage where a constraint is being felt in this regard. Investment in technologies that economize in the use of natural resources are now more cost beneficial than further exploitation of these resources. The demographic change that has come in the Soviet Union is that, with the children of the war generation now entering the labour force, there is a decline in the rate of growth of the labour force. Simultaneously, with the post-war generation reaching the rather early age of retirement in the Soviet Union, the number of pensioners will increase. These factors require a switch over to an Intensive Method in which reliance is placed on an increase in the productivity both of labour and of capital than on an

expansion of either of these, which was the basis of the earlier Extensive Method

In view of some of the current controversies it may be useful to mention that Aganbegyan's analysis shows that the Extensive Method served its purpose during the Stalin era. According to the statistics given in his book the economy of the Soviet Union had reached the 1913 levels by about 1927, which meant that the industrial production of the Soviet Union at that time was 4 per cent of the world's industrial output. This reached 10 per cent by 1941 and enabled the Soviet Union to fight back Hitler's invasion. Today the Soviet Union's industrial output is 20 per cent of the world output. After the Second World War, the Soviet Union had to immediately face the challenge posed by the capitalist nations possessing the atom bomb. By the time Stalin died the Soviet Union was strong enough to prevent them from attempting to give a pre-emptive death blow to it taking advantage of its having been crippled during the Second World War.

What really seems to have happened is that, unlike countries like Germany and Japan that took advantage of the total destruction caused by the war to rebuild their industry on an entirely new technological base, the Soviet Union, more or less replaced the old structure. It is not as if this is realized only now. Aganbegyan describes earlier attempts at reforms, first in the 50s and later again in the 60s. He even mentions that the effort in 60s met with some initial success but there was a retreat thereafter due to other social and political aspects not having been tackled at that time. The unique feature of the present attempt by Gorbachev is that perestroika is being attempted not merely in the economic sphere, but also in the social and political spheres, precisely because earlier failures showed that isolated attempts at economic perestroika are bound to fail.

In his June '88 report Gorbachev describes the economic reforms as consisting of.

a deep-going reform of the system of economic management truly radical in aims and scale. A considerable part of the primary cells of the economy are adopting the principles of complete operational autonomy (*khozraschot*) and self-financing in accordance with the Law on the State Enterprise. The recently enacted Law on Cooperatives is paving the way for a large cooperative sector in the Soviet economy, and for broad use of diverse forms of cooperation in all economic fields.

A restructuring of intra-production labour relations has begun on the basis of contractual and lease arrangements which combine the advantages of public ownership with the personal interest of the individual, a proprietary approach

and civic self-assertion. Visible impulse has been given to self-employment.¹⁶

Some of the proposals being made in the current discussion, however, go beyond this and have provoked criticism that socialism has failed and that capitalism is being restored. In a situation of Glasnost, or open discussion, that is now prevailing in the Soviet Union, various proposals are bound to be made and discussed. But they can no longer be taken to be all representative of the official view. Gorbachev himself has dismissed some of these proposals and re-affirmed his faith in socialism in his book.

True, the press carried some proposals which went outside our system. There was an opinion, for instance, that we ought to give up planned economy and sanction unemployment. We cannot permit this, however, since we aim to strengthen socialism, not replace it with a different system. What is offered to us from the West, from a different economy, is unacceptable to us. We are sure that if we really put into effect the potential of socialism, if we adhere to its basic principles, if we take fully into consideration human interests and use the benefits of a planned economy, socialism can achieve much more than capitalism. We can therefore assume that the solutions that will be sought will be within the framework of socialism, although the very framework of Socialism, as we knew it, might undergo a change in the course of these developments.¹⁷

However, even the proposals officially made raise some pertinent questions. In discussing the question of eliminating shortages Aganbegyan points out the inter-relationship between 'well founded prices', the establishment of trade and the 'dependence of wages on results' 'Well-founded prices' will raise the issue of subsidies. The present system of subsidies has been described in the *June 88 Report* as being 'not a normal situation. It undermines the incentives for producing these products, and gives rise to a wasteful attitude especially towards bread. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, to resolve this problem no matter how difficult it may be and no matter what doubt and fears it may create at first glance' Gorbachev no doubt promises that, 'the funds which the State is paying out as subsidies today will be handed over in full to the population as compensation'¹⁸ Nevertheless there would be problems because while the people as a whole may not be net losers, the impact of this on different individuals is bound to be different. Further, if we read this promise together with other statements about the budget deficit a doubt arises whether the abolition of subsidies would not at least partly be used for reducing the budget deficit. 'For many years State budget expenditure grew more

rapidly than the revenue. The Budget deficit is pressing down the market, undermining the stability of the rouble and of monetary circulation as a whole and giving rise to inflationary processes.¹⁹

Then there is the problem of wages and salaries and their relation to incentives. In his book, Gorbachev describes the present position in the Soviet Union as follows.

There is no exploitation of man by man, no division into rich and poor, into millionaires and paupers, all nations are equal among equals, all people are guaranteed jobs; we have free secondary and higher education and free medical services; citizens are well provided for in old age. This is the embodiment of social justice under socialism.²⁰

But in the *June '88 Report* he speaks of the '*khozraschot* principles of running the economy, which make it possible to link not only earnings, but also the satisfaction of social requirements, with the work contribution of a person'.²¹ Does this mean that even the social security to which a person can be entitled would depend upon his work contribution? In his book Gorbachev also makes the statement that 'the employee's incomes do not depend on the end results of the collectives' work'.²² The linking of wages to an individual's work and their linkage to the end result of the enterprise to which he may belong are two different concepts. Given a market economy, even a socialist market, it is quite possible that the end result is negative in spite of the best effort of the worker himself. In capitalist societies many trade union struggles have been fought precisely for protecting the worker from such negative consequences, which may be due to several reasons beyond his control. It is not clear as to what kind of safeguards will be built into the new arrangements to protect the workers in such situations. Aganbegyan also says that 'the incentive fund offers a purely subsidiary incentive; it is the basic wage that must play the main motivating role. To make the basic wage dependent on results is the key problem'.²³ However, after discussing the various problems in this regard, the suggestion he makes is that there could be a centrally established system of pay scales on which would be superimposed incentive awards, bonuses, etc. In the basic wage system the present attempt is to improve the salaries of qualified technical personnel such as engineers so as to have a perceptible differential between them and ordinary industrial workers, a differential which seems to have disappeared in the Soviet Union in the recent past. Since science and technology are to be the main ingredients of the effort for increasing productivity, qualified scientific workers and engineers have to be given additional incentives. As Aganbegyan puts it, 'In the light of the requirements of the new technology, the decline of the occupational prestige of skilled engineers is unacceptable'.²⁴ There seems to have

been more egalitarianism in the Soviet Union than capitalist propaganda in the past led us to believe

In regard to planning there is a curious inversion of confidence Galbraith had shown earlier how the new industrial society requires investments on such a scale that even capitalists require planning in order to reduce their risks over time. The only constraint on planning was considered to be not its desirability but its technical or mathematical feasibility. With the advent of computers it was imagined that this constraint would be removed. In Alec Nove's introduction to Aganbegyan's book he quotes Robbins (whom he describes as a critic of socialism) as expressing alarm 'he thought that the Soviet system, unlike our own, could generate and define an objective function, a clear aim, a maximand, and then use computers and programming to find an optimal path to the achievement of given objectives'. On the other hand, as Nove points out, Aganbegyan's book gives 'the many reasons why the centralized systems could not rise to these new challenges. The former Director of the Mathematical Economics Institute Fedorenko once quipped that a coherent, fully-checked and disaggregated plan for next year might be ready, with the help of computers, in roughly 30,000 years' time!²⁵ Or as Gorbachev puts it in his book, 'to expect that the State Planning Committee will be able to trace all intersectoral links and choose an optimum variant is to harbour an illusion'²⁶ If, for this reason, we adopt a market system while retaining centralized planning for certain purposes then we will have to work out suitable mechanisms or procedures for reconciling the impulses of the two. A third dimension is added by the role assigned to the Soviet. The details of all this will, therefore, have to be awaited.

There is a whole set of other issues that would arise in regard to the efficiency of the market system in a situation of scarcity. We have a vicious circle, where elimination of shortages is needed for an efficient and equitable functioning of the market, while the market system is said to be needed to provide the incentive for more efficient production which alone can eliminate shortages. This market system has also to function within an economy where there will still be overall centralized planning in one form or the other. We will not go into these technical problems here. They will need separate consideration after we have more information of what exactly the solutions offered are. The important point is that we are discovering once again here, as in the case of alienation, that a number of problems which were hitherto considered to be problems arising out of the relations of production are proving to be inherent in the means or method of production.

If we were discussing only stagnation or only the fact that the level of the economy has still lagged behind the level of the most advanced capitalist countries, there would not have been much reason for being disturbed on such grounds. We could well have said that such a situation was the inevitable result of the initial lag in development between Russia and other western countries and the different order of

priorities followed in a socialist country which might make comparisons in conventional terms difficult. What is disturbing is that these are not the only aspects mentioned. More important than these is the recurring emphasis on the kind of social psychology—a 'psychology of dependence'—that is said to have 'struck deep roots'. 'Parasitical attitudes were on the rise, the prestige of conscientious and high-quality labour began to diminish and a "wage-levelling" mentality was becoming widespread' ²⁷ There are references in the 88 Report to those 'who are lazy, wasteful and idle', to a 'slipshod attitude on the job, poor discipline at work, inertness, and sponging on society'. The disturbing aspect is how such attitudes could come up on such a large scale in a socialist society.

In any society there will always be a minority which will exhibit such attitudes for reasons not entirely connected with economic considerations. But the manner in which Gorbachev mentions these attitudes shows that we are not dealing with a minority here but with the psychology of, at least, a significant part of the population. These are symptoms of alienation and we cannot escape the impression, if not the conclusion, that the roots of alienation in Soviet society today are perhaps deeper and wider than it had been imagined earlier. This would require an analysis in greater depth than can be done here. Only one aspect may, however, be mentioned. In the original formulation of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need', the change that has always been considered necessary in the initial stages has been only in regard to the second part of the formulation, which becomes 'to each according to his work'. What is the reason for this? One reason could be that the economy would not have reached a stage where it can provide to everybody according to his need. The production of goods necessary for satisfying the needs is determined by work and therefore its distribution can also be determined only by this. As Gorbachev says in his report of June '88, 'values and benefits do not arise of their own accord—they are created only by work' ²⁸ The constraint here, therefore, is a constraint of the availability of the goods for satisfying needs. Initially, when what a man receives for his work is not sufficient for his needs, we assume that he will work harder in order to fulfil his needs. The need, therefore, is the motivation for work. It is for this reason that in capitalism more and more needs have to be created so that man may be induced to do more and more work for satisfying those needs, since the profit of the capitalists is a by-product of this very process. As Marx himself observed, the expansion of production and of needs 'becomes an ingenious and always calculating subservience to inhuman, depraved, unnatural and imaginary appetites'. But all this does not yet link the second part of the propositions to the first. Will a mere change over to a system related to 'each according to his work' assure the other part of the proposition, namely, 'from each according to his ability'? Obviously not, since problems of motivation related to getting a person to give fully of his

ability have not been solved even in capitalist societies where wage is related only to work. The fact that these two propositions were part of the same formulation gives rise to the wrong impression that they have a causal relationship. We had so far assumed that socialism would provide a more rational environment for achieving this objective. Obviously, this has not been so

It is not the intention of the reforms with which we are concerned; we have to look at what the outcome of their inherent logic will be. After all, even when the administrative method was initially introduced the intentions were laudable but obviously the results, according to Gorbachev's own assessment, have not been what were originally intended. This was because there was a contradiction between the logic of the motivations relied upon and the intentions of the designers. The danger of a similar contradiction in the present arrangements between intentions and inherent logic should not be underestimated. The new economic system will be based on, what Aganbegyan describes as, 'the most powerful incentive, economic interest'.²⁹ When we use 'economic levers and incentives' to motivate, we should bear in mind that these levers have different aspects and levels of operation. At the first stage the purely economic motivation is meant for satisfying the basic human needs. At the second stage, it becomes satisfaction of the needs which the present level of culture imposes, which is sometimes described as quality of life. In the third stage a person wants security which would include provision for his own disability and old age. Then there is the desire to give a headstart to one's own children. Incidentally this desire is conceded by Gorbachev in his report when he states that 'many proposals on letting people pay the state the cost of their flats so as to be able to leave them to their heirs, seem to be reasonable as well'.³⁰ When the limits of consumption are reached and income still accumulates it must either become conspicuous consumption or wealth. Yugoslavia is already facing this dilemma and private investments are being justified on these grounds. When income becomes wealth the economic lever becomes a power lever. After having achieved these stages a person wants money or wealth, the manifestations of the economic lever, for exercising power. Money is wanted for acquiring power and power is wanted for acquiring money. In capitalist societies this motivational aspect of the economic lever has been realized. That is why, at the highest level it is no longer extra remuneration that is offered in capitalism, but stocks, shares and access to political power. Once we start depending only on economic levers for motivating human beings it would not be possible to draw the line at any of these intermediate stages so long as our goal is only economic efficiency. Some ideological presumptions and constraints are required. We shall revert to this issue later.

Glasnost: Democratization

This term can be applied not merely to openness in discussion and public affairs, which is strictly what it means, but to the entire process of democratization that has been initiated in the political life and institutions in the Soviet Union. There can be no two opinions about the need for this or about the boldness of the initiatives that Gorbachev has been taking. In one sense this part of the revolution is easier because it is an entirely internal matter, unlike perestroika which, at some stage, would require adjustments to the international economy in matters such as, for instance, the freely convertible rouble. The ideological issues would also be less fundamental and less sharp in this case because there is no basic contradiction between democratization and socialism, as there may be in regard to socialism and some aspects of economic incentives and market economy. On the other hand, while these political aspects of perestroika are of immense importance to the Soviet Union itself, they would not provide any new inspiration or guidance to people in countries like ours, since much of the experiment consists of introducing institutions and procedures which we have already had ever since independence. Here again glasnost is unlike perestroika, where the experiments which the Soviet Union is now trying can be of considerable importance and significance to all countries interested in democratic socialism.

Glasnost consists of much that is already familiar to us. The importance of the mass media, the rule of law, the secret ballot, etc. are all institutions which we already have and which we have been trying to preserve, not without considerable struggle from time to time. For those of us who have lived in bourgeois democratic societies it does sound amusing to read, 70 years after the October Revolution, statements like 'everything which is not prohibited by law is allowed',³¹ or 'it is especially important to guarantee the independence of judges',³² or the statement made in the *June '88 Report* that, 'It would be worthwhile to designate dates on which the government would reply to questions from deputies and to expand the practice of deputies' inquiries'.³³ The only interesting aspect of all this is that many of these institutions and practices in other countries had been dismissed earlier as being purely decorative or illusory.

The fundamental issues that remain, however, are the role of the party, the relationship between the party and the Soviets and the question whether democratization would not ultimately require a multi-party system. For the time being there has been no compromise on any of these issues. The combining of the posts of the first secretary of the party and the Chairman of the Soviets has been seen by some as a concession made to the conservatives in the party. However, the reason given in the June report is that, considering the existing prestige of the Secretary of the party, it is felt that, if he is not the Chairman of the Soviet, then the prestige of the Soviet as a representative body would suffer, as it had done when the First Secretary of the party was on the

Executive Committees which then over-shadowed the Soviets. There is considerable validity in this argument and it need not be considered a mere rationalization. Gorbachev also goes on to say that 'the nomination of party leaders to chair Soviets will make them more effectively answerable to the working people because the elections at the sessions will be conducted by secret ballot. This means that the mandate received by a party leader from communists will be verified and confirmed by representatives of the people each time, at all levels of the system of Soviets. Naturally, the nomination of a party secretary may not always be supported by the deputies. If that is the case, the party committee and the Communists will obviously have to draw the necessary conclusions.'³⁴ Given the existing situation and the fact that this is a period of transition from an existing situation to a new one it would not be fair to unduly cavil on this point. The process of democratization has far-reaching consequences and the fact that, in practice, some compromises may have to be made does not in any way detract from it. That compromises are made shows that the present process is a democratic one since evolution through compromise is the essence of democratic change.

A common ideology and the strength of the Communist Party have been a major factor in holding the Republics of the Soviet Union together even while the backward Republics in the Asiatic part of the Union were developing rapidly and finding expression for their own native culture. The effect of glasnost and the shift in emphasis between the Party and the Soviets on the centrifugal forces need to be carefully watched. In the '88 report it has been stated that 'the Party's economic, social and ethnic policy should be carried out above all via the Soviets of peoples' deputies as the organs of popular government'.³⁵ It is also conceded in the same report that with the present level of democratic development there is need for 'a more precise definition of the status rights and duties of Union and autonomous Republics'.³⁶ That even the current level of Glasnost has already created some problems is admitted in the report where it is stated that:

There are some who think in this way any problems can be solved—from redrawing boundaries to setting up opposition parties. The CPSU Central Committee considers that such abuses of democratization are fundamentally at variance with the aims of Perestroika and run counter to the people's interests.³⁷

It is also stated that:

Some issues began to grow more complicated and acquire a nationalistic aspect in some cases—providing a pretext for all sorts of speculations and emotional extremes—we have

recently seen for ourselves how tangled the problems of relations between nationalities can become.³⁸

In reviewing these problems and the question of nationalities, tribute is paid in the *'87 Report* 'to the outstanding achievements of Leninist Nationalities Policy' and it is stated that 'we have every right to say that the nationalities question has been solved in our country'.³⁹ However, in looking for factors in the future that would contribute to the cohesion and the unity of the Soviet Union, considerable emphasis seems to be placed on the leading role of the 'great Russian People'. In the *'87 report* it is stated that:

the peoples of our country express their profound respect and gratitude to the great Russian people for their selflessness, their genuine internationalism and invaluable contribution to the creation, development and consolidation of the socialist union of free and equal republics, to the economic, social and cultural progress of all the peoples of the Soviet Union.⁴⁰

Similar views are expressed in the book. The following statement would be of particular interest to us because of the problem we also have regarding national and regional languages.

But at the same time, in one vast multi-ethnic country we cannot do without a common means of communication. The Russian language has naturally come to fulfill this role. Everybody needs this language, and history itself has determined that the objective process of communication develops on the basis of the language of the biggest nation. For example, though representatives of many ethnic groups came together in the United States, English became their common language. Apparently, this was a natural choice. One can imagine what would have happened if members of each nation moving to the U.S. had spoken only their own tongues and refused to learn English! The same applies to this country, where the Russian people have proven by their entire history that they have a tremendous potential for internationalism, respect and goodwill to all other peoples. Experience has shown that two languages should be studied (apart from a foreign one)—one's mother-tongue and Russian—so as to communicate with others.⁴¹

It is doubtful whether the reliance on the nature of the Russian people and the fact that they are the most advanced people amongst the various nationalities in the Soviet Union would suffice to deal with this problem. Just as various well known parliamentary procedures are now being adopted by the Soviet Union, it would become

necessary, in course of time, for them to study and adopt the legal and administrative procedures that have been evolved elsewhere in dealing with the problems of federal relations. That they are aware of the importance of this question is shown by the fact that it is stated in the '88 Report that 'the Central Committee plans to devote a special plenary meeting to the promotion of inter-ethnic relations'.⁴²

Socialism and the World

Almost half of the book deals with the subject of new thinking and the World. This aspect of perestroika and Gorbachev's contribution in this particular regard will, perhaps, go down in history as its most important and revolutionary aspect so far as the future of humanity itself is concerned. The new thinking regarding socialism and the world falls under two broad heads: (1) A reappraisal of the potentialities of capitalism and of its capacity to adapt and survive; (2) A realization of the threat of annihilation that nuclear destruction poses to the entire human race and to Planet Earth and the new approach that this realization ought to compel us to consider in regard to: (a) the relations between socialism and capitalism as two forms of economic organization available to developing nations in the third world, and (b) the relations between the developed capitalist nations and the existing socialist Nations, i.e. the first and the second worlds. Item (c) covers the entire area of the foreign relations of the Soviet Union in general and of disarmament in particular. This aspect is not dealt with in this paper because it has been widely discussed and it is an area in which the policies of the Soviet Union are so enlightened and far-seeing that they can be allowed to speak for themselves.

In the report of November '87 Gorbachev deals at some length with, what he calls, 'the nature of imperialism' and raises a number of questions. It is this part of his thesis that has caused the greatest controversy in communist circles, even more than the much publicized re-assessment of Stalin. This is also a part of the thesis where international debate is required. In regard to the three earlier aspects namely, a re-assessment of the past, perestroika and glasnost, a view can be taken that, when all is said and done, the final authority on these subjects and the final arbiter has to be the CPSU. It is their economy and their state and they have the final right to decide what they wish to do with it. Anyone outside the Soviet Union has no right to urge that, in the interests of ideological purity, the Soviet people should continue to put up with shortages, scarcities and economic hardships. If the Soviet people wish to relax, both in an economic and in an ideological sense, it is their prerogative, not only because it is their life, but also because it is they who paid the price so far and not we who have sat comfortably outside the Soviet Union and have not undergone the same hardships. Since the Soviet Union is the first socialist state and the October Revolution is an event of international significance, those who believe in communism have an interest in what

is happening in the Soviet Union and to some extent, they have a right to participate in the debate, since communism has always been an international movement, and Gorbachev concedes this:

The essence of our internationalist principle is: Making important, meaningful decisions at home, and carefully weighing up what this will mean for Socialism as a whole. It goes without saying that no Socialist country can successfully move forward in a healthy rhythm without understanding, solidarity and mutually beneficial cooperation with the other fraternal nations, or at times even without their help⁴³

But the ultimate decision has to be of the Soviet people, as is implied in that last phrase, 'or at times even without their help' He concedes the same principle for other communists when he says, 'drawing on the Soviet experience some countries failed duly to consider their own specifics. Even worse, a stereotyped approach was given an ideological tint by some of our theoreticians'.⁴⁴

However, when it comes to the question of the nature of imperialism, the debate becomes truly ideological and international No special prerogative vests here with the Soviet Party They may base their foreign policy on their own perception of what their national interest demands; but in a theoretical discussion of the nature and role of imperialism all parties are potentially equal Let us therefore consider the issue raised by Gorbachev regarding the nature of imperialism First is the question whether 'given the current stage of the world's development and the new level of its inter-dependence and integration is it possible to influence that nature and block its more dangerous manifestations?'⁴⁵ Gorbachev's reply seems to be in the affirmative, based partly on an analysis of the existing situation and partly on wishful thinking. He feels that 'a kind of latter-day 'peaceful' re-partitioning of the world-according to capital'⁴⁶ has taken place, implying thereby that the danger of such partitioning being revised by capitalist wars, as was the case till the Second World War, is not there. The danger could have come from the socialist bloc not accepting this partitioning of the world But here Gorbachev gives the assurance that the Soviet Union understands that

developed capitalism has been and will be unable to do without these countries' resources. This is an objective fact The calls for severing the historically shaped world economic ties are dangerous and offer no solution.⁴⁷

He is even more explicit in his book where he says.

I have explained on many occasions that we do not pursue goals inimical to western interests. We know how important

the middle East, Asia, Latin America, other third world regions and also South Africa are for American and West European economies, in particular as raw material sources. To cut these links is the last thing we want to do, and we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed, mutual economic interests.⁴⁸

Obviously then, it is not the nature of imperialism that has changed but the attitude of the socialist state to the needs of imperialism that has changed in the new context of the threat of the extinction of human race itself posed by nuclear war

The next question Gorbachev addresses himself to is whether the capitalist economy can develop without militarization. He recognizes that the rechannelling of resources into the military industrial complex on the pretext of a Soviet threat has so far helped sustain the capitalist economies by allaying their contradictions and balancing their different interests. But he goes on to give the examples of Japan, West Germany and Italy to show that capitalism can develop even without militarization. He points out that in fact, 'super-militarization increasingly aggravates the domestic situation and upsets the economies of other countries' ⁴⁹

Gorbachev's third argument is that 'the neo-colonialist methods of using the resources of others, the arbitrary practices of the transnational corporations, the debt related bondage that ... obviously cannot be repaid, also lead to an impasse' ⁵⁰ He illustrates this point in his book by referring to a conversation with President Mitterand.

A capitalist or a company are forced, largely under worker pressure, to reckon with the fact that, if the enterprise is to function effectively, it is imperative that employees' incomes are guaranteed, and, despite their low level, are sufficient to enable them to restore their production capacities, maintain their health, upgrade their qualifications, and raise their children. The capitalist is forced to do this realizing that in doing so he is ensuring himself profit today and tomorrow. But capitalism taken as a whole, represented by the Western Countries, does not want to understand even this simple trust in its relation with its former colonies.⁵¹

Gorbachev's approach, therefore, is to try and show the capitalist countries that it is in their own interests that they should change the existing international economic order in such a way that, while it would bring about the development of the Third World, it would also help sustain their own economies

Gorbachev's vision of the future economic order of the world is, therefore, based on the following premises:

1. Imperialism requires neo-colonial sources of resources and has found these sources by a peaceful division of the Third World among its own countries.
2. The Socialist countries recognize this fact and will assure that they will not disturb this division in order to avoid global nuclear conflict.
3. But Imperialism needs to realize that it can develop without militarism and in fact super-militarism actually leads it into crises.
4. That the present method of exploiting the third world countries also leads to debt crises.

Therefore if the arms race is given up and instead the industrial countries help in the development of the Third World countries then 3 and 4 can be avoided. In this effort the socialist countries can also help, without disturbing the spheres of influence of the imperialist countries. This way all three groups will benefit, the imperialists, the socialist countries and the Third World and humanity will be rescued from the nuclear threat. 'The on-going processes have the force of an objective law: either a disaster or a joint quest for a new economic order taking into account the interests of all on an equal basis—through implementing the 'disarmament-for-development concept'.⁵²

According to Gorbachev 'the Soviet Union and the United States are especially responsible for the future of the world '⁵³

The USSR and the USA could come up with large joint programmes, pooling our resources and our scientific and intellectual potentials in order to solve the most diverse problems for the benefit of human kind.⁵⁴

In the context of the nuclear threat this is a laudable objective. If, as Gorbachev hopes, capitalism also realizes the essential logic and sense of what he is saying we have a peaceful and hopeful prospect for the world. Those who believe in socialism would believe that the logic of such a solution would appeal to a socialist because socialism is based on non-exploitation of man and on a faith in human capacity for understanding and development. But can we have a similar confidence in the ability of capitalism to see even its own future welfare since its basic impulse is not cooperation and welfare but competition and aggrandizement! If capitalism evolves to a state where it can appreciate the basic logic and motivation of such an international venture it may well not be capitalism at all but some form of modified socialism

On these premises what is the kind of scenario one can construct for the future of the world. Quite obviously the most positive scenario would assume that the Soviet Union and the USA are enlightened and responsible enough to avoid nuclear conflict and consequent global annihilation. Certainly their record so far justifies a confidence in their sense of responsibility. They have so far reacted in different situations in a carefully graduated manner and have shown a greater capacity for understanding and accommodating each other than lesser nations have done. If there are any two conflicting nations today in the world in whose hands the future of this planet can be placed, on the basis of their past performance, it would be the USA and the USSR. Lesser nations have shown themselves more irresponsible in inverse proportion to their real strength. This would justify the logic behind the nuclear non-proliferation treaty under which new nations should not now acquire nuclear weapons. Certainly on present calculations the nuclear power and parity of the USSR and the USA offer the best bet for the safety of the future of the world. In short, we should have a peaceful world with the USA and the USSR as guarantors. What would happen to socialism in such a world? The developing countries would be free to make this choice and it will be part of the understanding between the USA and USSR that neither of them would interfere with their choices. Even the transnationals 'for all their might, will be forced to adjust to the independent choice that has been or will be made by the peoples' ⁵⁵ It would be a kind of international economic Olympics in which there would be friendly contests between different systems in these countries with the USA and the USSR as the umpires.

Stalinist Russia had an attraction not only for communists but for all those underdeveloped countries who hoped to industrialize their countries rapidly and catch up with the West. It was an example not merely of building socialism in one country but of rapid industrialization in a backward economy. perestroika, on the other hand, is trying to correct the distortions in an economy which is otherwise very advanced. It may not therefore have the same relevance to developing economies that the Soviet experiment had in the earlier phase. It may have some relevance for India because of the level of its economy and the periodic protestations of socialism. But, by and large, perestroika's main impact will be on Europe where it may make communism both relevant and respectable again. For those countries outside Europe—except the solitary case of Cuba which stands on the same footing as Eastern Europe—that have already made a commitment to socialism, Bukharin would be recommended since in the case of the Soviet Union he was found to be wrong only because of its encirclement at that time. This advice would apply to countries like Nicaragua. For the other developing countries, where a confused nascent capitalism now prevails it would appear that the balance of advantage would lie in their going through the phase of capitalist

development. Russia and China have shown that when socialism is attempted in a country where capitalism has not yet fully developed, there is a great deal of hardship and inefficiency and leaders like Stalin and Mao arise. Even so there may have been some justification in the case of Russia and China because they were countries of continental size which could attempt autarchic development whether of a socialist or of any other kind. But with a few exceptions like India, no other country in the world can attempt this kind of development for want of size and resources. If these countries become socialist like Cuba they will have to be constantly sustained by the Soviet Union. Given its own problems the Soviet Union may not be able to bear such a burden at this juncture. All the other countries, therefore, have to consider a model of development which involves international inter-dependence.

The role of international aid would be limited even in the new situation. In this situation linkages with the capitalist world, even if it be through transnationals, would help. For a lot of smaller countries in the Third World, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore would offer better models for development, once we concede that imperialism can have a benign aspect and transnationals can play a positive role. If the objectives of this participation are made a little more enlightened it should be possible to work out a symbiotic relationship which would be beneficial to both the parties. Some price would, no doubt, have to be paid by someone, most probably by the poor in the developing countries. But experience so far has shown that someone has to suffer in the process of development whatever the model adopted. In the socialist model Stalin or Mao can be blamed; in capitalism, god, history or the cupidity of man according to one's taste and social discipline. This is a regrettable fact of life which one has to accept. Its acceptance will be rendered less painful by the realization that it may now be part of the price to be paid for avoiding nuclear annihilation. And then there is the hope and the prospect that, once a capitalist base is built and these contradictions become acute, a less painful transformation to socialism can be attempted.

The realization of the threat of nuclear annihilation has led to a re-assessment of the concept of peaceful co-existence. The Leninist concept of peaceful co-existence was said to be needed, at first, 'above all, to create a modicum of external conditions for the construction of a new society in the country of the Socialist Revolution'.⁵⁶ Then this principle 'was refined, with account taken of the changes brought about by the Second World War'.⁵⁷ 'Specifically we deemed it no longer possible to retain in it the definition of peaceful co-existence of states with different social systems as 'a specific form of class struggle'.⁵⁸ The 27th CPSU Congress also,

clearly divorced the revolution and war themes, excluding from the new edition of the party programme the following two phrases: 'should the imperialist aggressors nevertheless

venture to start a new world war, the peoples will no longer tolerate a system which drags them into devastating wars. They will sweep imperialism away and bury it'.

This provision, admitting in theory, the possibility of a new world war was removed as not corresponding to the realities of the nuclear era.

The competition between capitalist and socialist countries 'can and must be kept within a framework of peaceful co-existence which necessarily envisages cooperation'.⁵⁹ Nevertheless in the *'88 Report* it is stated that

we do not forget about the threat to peace from imperialist militarism and consider that there are no guarantees as yet that the positive processes that have begun are irreversible.⁶⁰

However, the overall conclusion is that

peaceful co-existence later, particularly in the nuclear age 'became a condition for the survival of the entire human race'.⁶¹

In the *'87 Report* it is stated that, 'the CPSU has no doubts about the future of the Communist movement as one that offers an alternative to Capitalism'.⁶² Communism is thus no longer the historically inevitable form into which capitalism must evolve because of its inner dialectical contradictions and their revolutionary resolution. It is a matter of choice and hope is now based on communism's inherent superiority and the rationality of peoples' choice and not on the dynamics of history. In this view of future social revolution, perestroika and glasnost will introduce certain features of a competitive market and parliamentary democracy into the Soviet structure. Simultaneously capitalism will adopt some features of this restructured Soviet State because of its advantages. The Soviet Union has realized its mistakes and is correcting itself. Similarly capitalism must see its own inadequacies and adopt some features of socialism. If it does not do so, its contradictions will continue leading it to its decline and to increasing misery of its people. If some elements in capitalist societies see this, but others attempt to thwart them, there will be fresh contradictions. In either case, peaceful coexistence will be threatened despite the most enlightened restraint by the Communist countries. If, on the other hand, the capitalists also realize the gravity of the nuclear threat they will be enlightened enough to make rational choices, which can only mean the perestroika of capitalism inspired by the perestroika of communism. Once we talk of alternatives and rational choice and not of

- historical inevitability and dialectical evolution we have to logically concede the possibility of convergence. In fact given the new vision of peaceful coexistence we have to actively work for convergence because convergence alone will lay a firm foundation for a 'peaceful coexistence which necessarily envisages cooperation'

There is subtle distinction between the perception of the role of the Soviet Union in Europe, on the one hand and in Asia on the other. Gorbachev asserts that 'the Soviet Union is an Asian, as well as European country,'⁶³ but in regard to Europe his statement is more assertive when he says that 'we are Europeans. Old Russia was united with Europe by Christianity. . . and the history of Russia is an organic part of the great European history'.⁶⁴ In the case of Europe there is a stress on the common cultural heritage and there is a desire to join in the endeavour to build 'a common European Home'. Just as glasnost might introduce certain strains between the Republics of the Soviet Union, it may also bring about changes in the relationships between the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The way Gorbachev looks at this problem, he would perhaps like to transform the inter-bloc nature of the confrontation in Europe today into a cooperation between all nations of Europe, on the basis of a common European Home which would transcend the ideological differences between them. On the other hand, in the case of Asia and the Pacific zone, the approach is that, by virtue of its land mass in the Asiatic continent and its status as a super power, the Soviet Union's role in maintaining peace in this region as well as in assisting in its development, should be acknowledged, along with that of other regional powers, which would include the United States of America, Canada and Australia.

If Russia shares a common culture with Europe, the Asiatic republics of the Soviet Union share a similar common culture and religion with the Islamic world. If, on the basis of the former, we talk of a common European Home, then should we not, on the basis of the latter, talk of a common Islamic region? If we look at the map we can see that Islam extends continuously from the Western tip of North Africa to the Central Asiatic republics. If Russia, to the west of the Urals, can form part of the common European Home, there can be an Islamic zone covering this entire region to the south and east of Europe. But once we start talking in these terms, a dichotomy develops within the Soviet Union itself. Till now this problem did not arise, at least in theory, because, while Russia was European in its regional culture and the Central Asiatic republics have their own culture, they were both united by a common concept of a socialist culture, which was neither European nor Asiatic. If this concept is given up and we start talking in terms of ancient religious and historical ties and cultural affinities, the focus of the entire pattern changes. It is not a question of whether it is desirable or not, but of facing the logical consequences of certain approaches.

With regard to the Soviet Union and the USA not much need be said because this is one aspect of perestroika that is most widely known. Gorbachev's view of the USA is so accurate, objective and humane that it cannot but be considered as a remarkable achievement that the leader of one super power should be able to appreciate the other super power with this degree of sympathy and objectivity. He gently debunks the exaggerated view the Americans have of their own country as a 'shining city atop a hill'; but adds 'that neither do we consider the US an "evil empire"'. Like all countries America in reality casts both light and shadows' ⁶⁵ There can be no doubt that Gorbachev has a more objective and far-reaching view of the USA and its role than Reagan has of the Soviet Union. There can also be no doubt that the dedication of the leadership of the Soviet Union to peace is stronger and more sincere than that of the US.

CONCLUSION

Perestroika as a revolution raises basic ideological and philosophical issues also. It started, on the one hand, with a realization of the mistakes of the past, and, on the other, with an appreciation of the danger of the annihilation of the human species itself, that the nuclear threat poses. The ghost of Stalin had to be laid to rest and the spectre of nuclear annihilation had to be avoided. The former required perestroika and glasnost within the Soviet Union and the latter required a reappraisal, not only of the relations of the Soviet Union with the world but, of the relations between socialism and capitalism in the future. Gorbachev himself concedes that these issues may require us to go beyond all past premises. Lenin is quoted very often, both in the book and the other documents. But, it is evident from the context that this reiteration of Lenin is more for purposes of legitimacy within the Russian context rather than for applying any rigid Leninist principles for dealing with the problems of the future. Following the logic of Gorbachev's proposals the line will have to be drawn beyond Lenin, beyond even conventional Marxism. Gorbachev may well be seen to belong to the new breed of humanist Marxists, or 'young Marxists', or philosophic, as opposed to economic deterministic, Marxists with whom we, in the outside world, have become familiar, ever since the focus shifted from *Das Kapital* to the *Grundrisse* and to the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of Marx. According to Gorbachev:

The classics of Marxism-Leninism left us with a definition of the essential characteristics of socialism. They did not give us a detailed picture of socialism. They spoke of its theoretically predictable stages. It is our job to show what the present stage should be like. We'll have to actually go through this stage, for the classics teach us the approach, not the techniques (page 45).

Many decades of being mesmerized by dogma, by a rule-book approach have had their effect. Today we want to inject a genuinely creative spirit into our theoretical work⁶⁶

The climactic event for Gorbachev is a total, and not merely intellectual, realization of the danger to humanity of nuclear annihilation. As the head of a state, which holds this deadly power in its hand, this spectre haunts him. The 'event' in neo-Marxism is no longer the immiserisation of the proletariat and its consequent messianic role but the bomb. From this premise he reviews the role of Marxism in the new era. The threat of the extinction of humanity has lent relevance to the concept of human values. He is aware of how this is a break from the conventional Marxist approach to a generic concept such as human values. He concedes that 'it may seem strange to some people that the communists should place such a strong emphasis on human interests and values'⁶⁷ Nevertheless the present historic task is to find a common basis for humanity's survival. He says

We have sought a deeper understanding of the inter-relationship between working class interests and those of humanity as a whole, an idea built into Marxism from the outset. This led us to the conclusion that common human values have a priority in our age, this being the core of our new political thinking—the moral values that have over the centuries been evolved by nations, and generalized and spelled out by humanity's great minds⁶⁸

Indian culture, Indian philosophy and India's spiritual tradition are specifically mentioned as the inspiration or the 'feedback' for the Delhi Declaration.⁶⁹ Obviously this refers to the Buddha's and Gandhi's principle of ahimsa or non-violence which has acquired a new significance in view of the threat of nuclear annihilation of humanity itself. But it is not realized that another aspect of Gandhi's thought has also acquired fundamental significance now—this is in regard to alienation and its relationship to the structure of modern industrialization on the one hand and to our attitude to the nature of human needs on the other. We have earlier quoted Marx's observation that in capitalism needs can be based on inhuman and imaginary appetites. But like alienation this may turn out to be a feature not of capitalism alone but of modern industrialization itself. In both these cases Gandhi draws attention to factors which may be more deeply imbedded in the structure of modern industrialization and the nature of man than merely the economic relations of production. Now that human and moral values are conceded both autonomy and importance it may be possible to take a fresh look at some of these fundamental questions.

In all the current discussions the question of why a Socialist Man has not evolved so far is sought to be answered by putting the blame on the Stalinist methods used so far. A swing from this to unbridled economic motivation may yield results in material terms but will still not tackle this basic question. Human needs are determined not merely by the level of the technology and the cultural context but also by certain ideological presumptions. Erich Fromm points out that, 'as long as everybody wants to have more, there must be formation of classes, there must be class war, and in global terms, there must be international war. Greed and peace preclude each other'.⁷⁰ Therefore, he suggests that the economic system should no longer be governed by the question, 'What is good for the growth of the system?' but by the question, 'What is good for man?' He points out that, 'A new society is possible only if, in the process of developing it, a new human being also develops'.⁷¹ Gorbachev also sees socialism as 'a system of true and tangible humanism in which man is really the measure of all things'.⁷² Gorbachev shows vision in regard to the future of humanity when he talks of world peace and the common danger to humanity of clear extinction. But when it comes to economic restructuring and the future of Soviet society a similar vision about the nature of man seems lacking. He is, unconsciously, perhaps, only pursuing the 'shining city atop the hill'. In the short run, the problem of the Soviet Union may well be that of making life more comfortable for its citizens in the most conventional sense of the word. There should be no objection to tackling these problems immediately and giving this the highest priority. But, if simultaneously the larger question of the means that are being adopted to achieve this immediate objective is not considered, this may well lead to as cruel a distortion of the ends by the means as occurred when Stalin adopted the administrative and command method.

Throughout the ages man has tried to face the twin problems of evil and mortality. Religion offered him solace by promising mortality through faith in god. It could not, however, always reconcile the goodness and mercy of god, with the presence of evil in the world. The rational humanistic philosophies of the past two centuries, have tried to reconcile man to his individual mortality by identifying himself with the immortality of the species. Evil was sought to be exercised from society by more rational organization and it was presumed that it would automatically be evicted from the psyche of men brought up in such societies. Marxism provided the most rational analysis of this possibility. As Dostoyevsky put it, 'Socialism is a Tower of Babel, one being built deliberately without god, not in order to reach unto heaven but to bring down heaven to earth'. Nuclear annihilation then posed the same threat of total mortality to the human species as death had always posed to the individual. What Nietzsche's announcement of the death of god did to religion, the nuclear bomb does to secular hopes. Gorbachev now seeks to restore to humanity once more the hope of its

immortality. But if individual immortality depended upon faith in the mercy and grace of god, collective immortality depends upon faith in the goodness and rationality of man. History so far does not give sufficient ground for greater optimism in regard to this faith than the earlier faith.

The greatness of Gorbachev lies not in what he says. This has been said by many sensitive and intelligent citizens of the world ever since Bertrand Russell dramatized the nuclear threat. That Russia was stagnating, partly at least due to its own said historical experience, twisted by suffering and distorted in narration; that socialism needs to be democratized to release its potential and liberate its soul, that the modes and mores of democratic socialism need to be discussed, that planet earth was humanity's common home, and that nuclear weapons, which threatened this home and the human species, had qualitatively changed the context in and the methods by which international conflicts could be resolved. There is nothing new in all this which Gorbachev also now says. What is remarkable and, indeed, unique is that it is said by the head of one of the two nuclear superpowers of the world and he pledges to base his country's future policy on this realization. Being Indian the only parallel one can think of is of Ashoka at Kalinga. This book reads like an Ashokan edict. The analogy can be pursued to ponder over how far, and to what extent, humanity has learnt from such visions in the past. If there is reason for greater optimism now regarding man's future, Gorbachev is part of it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 2 *Ibid*, pp 106-107
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30 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

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PRABHAT PATNAIK*

Efficiency, Planning and Reforms in Socialist Economies: Some Theoretical Comments

In recent years, the socialist countries have initiated major reforms in the mode of management of their economies, reforms relating to prices, enterprise autonomy, the planning system, agricultural organisation and foreign trade. These reforms have been justified on the grounds that the earlier system of economic management, which, though in a significantly modified form, carried over the essential features of a command economy, had led these countries into a phase of stagnation. The picture of stagnation is not borne out by the available statistics; but the veracity of the statistics itself has been questioned. There is however no gainsaying the fact that a noticeable slowdown in the growth of output had occurred in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe for well over a decade. While the fundamental reason behind the slowdown is undoubtedly the exhaustion of the earlier labour reserves, i.e. the inevitable transition of these economies from the so-called 'extensive' to the 'intensive' phase of growth, critics point to certain built-in features of the system of economic management which kept economic performance considerably below its potential in the intensive phase. It is these so-called 'inefficiencies' of the system which the reforms are supposed to overcome.

Two broad kinds of 'inefficiency' are mentioned in the context of socialist economies: the first is their inability to generate innovativeness, as exemplified by the fact that they have lagged behind several capitalist countries, notably Japan, in the pace of their technical progress, and in particular in their participation in the electronics revolution. The second, which has figured more prominently in the discussion of reforms, is the 'slack' in resource use which exists in these economies. The economic literature coming out of Eastern Europe is full of instances of this latter kind of 'inefficiency.' In this paper I shall be concerned with this latter kind of 'inefficiency.' Since the case for reforms has been argued in the context of this 'inefficiency', any assessment of the nature of the reforms must address itself to the following questions: What is this 'inefficiency'? In what way can the current reforms overcome this 'inefficiency'? What other implications

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would the reforms have in the process of overcoming, if at all, this 'inefficiency'? Are there reforms of a different genre more appropriate to the occasion than those which are currently under way?

There is a basic difficulty about discussing these questions, namely that the socialist countries differ considerably among themselves with regard to the precise nature, extent and pace of these economic reforms, as indeed they did with regard to the precise state of their pre-reform economic situation. A meaningful discussion of the economic reforms at a general level, therefore, can be carried out only in a highly stylised manner, by examining two stylised prototypes, one of the old system and the other of the new system that is implicit in the conception of the current reforms. The fact that these stylised prototypes do not exactly correspond either to the actual past situation of any particular socialist country, or to the future state of affairs that would necessarily prevail in any of these countries, or even to the vision that the reformers themselves may have of the future, is irrelevant for our purpose. They are an analytical device for assessing the implications of the reforms.

I

For the first of these stylised prototypes, of a socialist economy under the old system, I shall rely on the model constructed by Janos Kornai, the eminent Hungarian economist. I use Kornai's work because he is among the first economists from Eastern Europe to provide a theoretical analysis of a socialist economy, as distinct from the normative discussion as well as from the plethora of anecdotes that have hitherto characterised the literature on socialism.¹ The basic distinction which underlies Kornai's work, and which he takes over from the work of Michael Kalecki, is between a demand-constrained system, and a supply-constrained system. Classical capitalism is demand-constrained while classical socialism is supply-constrained. The basic reason for this difference in his view lies in the fact that firms under socialism have 'soft' budget constraints. While the demand of the household sector is limited by the income which it receives, i.e. its budget constraint is 'hard', the demand of the firms for fixed capital formation and for inventory accumulation is almost insatiable. 'There are no financial or profitability considerations to restrain effectively the firms' exaggerated demand.'² As a result, socialist economies are characterised by a chronic shortage, which, by setting up a perennial expansion drive, sustains the investment hunger of firms as well as a widespread hoarding tendency, and this perpetuates itself. 'A vicious circle is thus created. shortage - quantity drive - increased demand for inputs - increasingly intensive shortage - ...' There are however certain counteracting forces which drive the system back to the normal level of shortage. 'Unusually intensive shortage dampens down the purchasing intentions of firms' because superior authorities, the banking system

and economic public opinion—which condemn hoarding—put some pressure on the firm to exercise selfrestraint ' A socialist economy, therefore is characterised by a constant, though not necessarily growing, reproduction of shortage.

This systemic behaviour according to him has striking consequences. On the one hand, it provides a remarkably powerful mechanism for sucking up labour reserves and for driving the system towards full employment.

In mobilising labour as the most important resource of society, in systematically bringing labour into the production process, the socialist economy proves to be highly efficient. This is one of its most important historical achievements ... The same economic growth-pattern and correspondingly the same control mechanism which introduce and constantly reproduce shortage on the market for goods, will at the same time bring about the absorption of the initially inactive reserves of labour, create full employment and then introduce and constantly reproduce shortage on the labour-market.³

Kornai refers to this as the *external* efficiency of the system.

On the other hand, the same systemic behaviour and growth pattern keeps down the *internal* efficiency of the system, in the sense that the input-output ratios for resources already drawn into production are higher in a regime of shortage than they would be in a regime free from shortage. Shortage leads to interruptions of production; shortage leads to forced substitutions, shortage undermines the discipline and morale of labour; the quantity drive which is the natural counterpart of shortage 'discourages firms from economising on input and taking care about the quality of the resulting output'; and above all, the sellers' market which shortage entails 'provides protection for those producing at high cost and for those conserving inefficiently old technologies or producing according to traditional product patterns'. This last point is linked to the question of inefficiency as regards innovativeness referred to earlier, though it by no means exhausts the content of the latter. Thus, shortage and slack go together; as the extent of shortage rises, so does the extent of slack, a proposition that distinguishes Kornai's analysis from those of economists like Malinvaud who have been looking at general equilibrium systems with fixed prices and rationing.

It is easy to derive from Kornai's analysis the conclusion that while the virtues of the system in mobilising labour reserves may tempt one to accept its vices as a minor price to pay during the extensive phase of growth, the same cannot be true during the intensive phase. When full employment has been reached, and no more inactive labour resources are available, it is the vices that come foremost into the picture since they keep down the growth-rate below its potential, precisely when the growth-rate in any case would be slowing down on account of labour

scarcity. In other words, once the scope for exploiting the *external* efficiency of the system is exhausted, its *internal* inefficiency becomes all the more glaring, the old planning system loses its historical justification and becomes a drag on further development once the economy moves from the extensive to the intensive phase of growth.

And now I come to the most crucial part of Kornai's analysis. He asserts that the 'shortage economy' he is talking about is different from a situation of 'repressed inflation'. It is not just that at the prevailing prices and money wages there is an excess of aggregate demand relative to full employment output which manifests itself in terms of shortages and has second-order effects on 'efficiency' and hence even the size of the full-employment output, but that these shortages would persist even if the price-level were allowed to change. The logic of the functioning of such an economy becomes most clearly visible on the assumption of stable prices, but it does not depend upon the stability of prices.

The main characteristic features summarised above—chronic shortage, strong expansion drive, quantity drive, unrestrainable investment spirit—can be observed when the price-level is stable. But they would also persist if the price-level began to change and a slow or accelerating inflation evolved.⁴

They are rooted, in other words, in more basic features of the economic system, notably the absence of any genuine concern for the financial risks of investment in the decision-making process of firms, which makes their investment demand insatiable. This aspect of Kornai's analysis, which also happens to be the most controversial, I shall discuss at some length later. For the moment however its implications, which are quite far-reaching, should be noted. The only way that the shortage-slack economy can be altered is by making the firms' budget constraint 'hard', and the only way that their budget constraint can be 'hardened' is by making them autonomous, i.e. by depriving them of the assurance of government support in the event of their making losses, or going bankrupt. If the firms are made autonomous and responsible for their own actions, this responsibility clearly cannot be expected of them at an arbitrarily fixed set of prices by the government. Responsibility in practice must mean responsibility to fix prices in the market, taking account of the state of demand. In short, Kornai's analysis provides a sophisticated theoretical case not only for reforming the old economic system, but in particular for reforming it in a specific direction, which also happens to be the direction that actual reforms have tended to take, namely of having autonomous publicly owned enterprises entering into exchange relations with one another on the market guided by the profit motive. This is essentially what the Chinese theoretical literature refers to as socialist commodity production, and this is also the objective of Soviet

reforms as spelt out by Gorbachev.⁵ The reason I have devoted so much space to a discussion of Kornai's analysis is because it provides a theoretical critique of the old system which logically leads up to a case for reforms in this particular direction.

II

The question which immediately arises is: how would a system where autonomous socialist enterprises relate to one another through the market actually behave? To examine this, I move over now to a discussion of the second stylised prototype. To underline their socialist character, i.e. the fact that profits earned by such enterprises do not accrue to a special class, of capitalists, I assume that all these enterprises are managed by workers' collectives which may of course hire specialised personnel for the purpose, much as capitalists do.

The first proposition which can be put forward for such a system is that if it wishes to maintain full employment while insulating itself from the world market, it would tend in practice to experience accelerating inflation. In an exchange economy, the price charged by a commodity seller represents simultaneously a claim upon social output. Charging a relatively higher price for its commodity is, for any particular group, tantamount therefore to shifting the distribution of social income in its own favour.⁶ In a situation of free competition there are clear limits to what any particular group of producers can do, by way of charging a higher price for their commodity, and thus tilting the distribution of income in their favour because other producers are free to move into their sphere of production and thus bid prices down to a level where the average rate of profit tends to get equalised across spheres for a given money wage which in turn is such as to give the workers a determinate real wage at the prevailing general price-level. In short, in conditions of free competition one cannot consciously tilt the terms of trade in one's own favour without losing business. But we are talking about a situation, whether in capitalist or in socialist countries, where there is not a mass of scattered producers competing within and across different spheres of production, but a few large enterprises dominating each sphere of production. Entry into a new sphere is difficult, costly and time-consuming. To be sure, this does not mean that monopolists face no constraints whatsoever in their price-fixing. Even when they do not encroach upon each others' territory, there are always potential new entrants, outside the charmed circle of existing enterprises, who can break into it if the latter earned 'excessively' high profits. But for this to happen there must be some reserves of unemployed labour and unutilised capacity for equipment production. If there is full employment, however, and the system is supply-constrained, and moreover, this being the peculiarly 'socialist' touch, if the workers themselves are the collective earners of profit so that there is no incentive for them to move from existing monopoly

enterprises to new ones, then even this threat of potential entry loses its sting. In other words, in a regime of pure socialist commodity production, where publicly owned enterprises trade with one another on the market, each managed by a workers' collective through which the workers are co-sharers in their profits, there is no theoretically discernible limit to the rate of inflation compatible with the maintenance of full employment, which is but another way of saying that the rate of inflation would tend to accelerate over time⁷

This proposition has two separate logical components which should be distinguished from one another. Of late there have been a number of 'conflict' models of inflation for advanced capitalist countries which argue that if the unemployment rate falls below a certain level (referred to in the literature as the 'non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment' or NAIRU), the inflation rate would tend to accelerate over time.⁸ These models postulate a conflict over distributive shares between workers and capitalists, and these conflicts become irreconcilable if aggregate demand relative to potential output is so large that both classes acquire great bargaining strengths. The first point implicit in the above proposition about socialist commodity production that I have advanced, is that there is no reason why in a socialist economy at full employment, the conflicts *between* enterprises, and the workers' collectives that manage them, should not become similarly irreconcilable, resulting in accelerating inflation. This, to be sure, is not socialist behaviour: but if enterprises are supposed to operate on the market as profit-maximising entrepreneurs, the logic of this operation must make them behave in a manner wherein socialist 'norms' can scarcely come into play. The second point implicit in the above proposition is that even if perchance claims are not irreconcilable to begin with, so that there are no unusual inflationary pressures at the outset, *over time* enterprises would learn to increase their claims, coming to realise their monopoly position, and push the economy towards accelerating inflation.

What I have postulated so far however is only a tendency. Let us look at some of the possible counteracting tendencies. There are at least three which immediately come to mind. Not all enterprises can be equally powerful in fixing their prices. If the higher claims of some sectors are accommodated through a corresponding lowering of the claims of some other sectors which can be squeezed, inflation need not accelerate.⁹ Even here however if the claims of the former increase over time, the claims of the latter would have to be continuously lowered to prevent acceleration of inflation. In short, inflation acceleration can be kept in check in such a model but only through steadily widening inequalities across sectors, and hence across social groups and regions. The widening inequalities arising from this source are likely to be additive to those arising from another source, namely from disparate rates of productivity growth across sectors. Altogether therefore this particular counteracting tendency amounts to a cure that

is even worse than the disease itself.¹⁰ A second possible counteracting tendency may arise from government intervention itself. But that only brings us back to the point from which we began, namely an array of government-administered prices which it was the purpose of socialist commodity production to break out of.

The third possible counteracting tendency against accelerating inflation is to introduce international competition into the domestic economy. A socialist country can maintain full employment without accelerating inflation if it permits potential entrants from outside to enter its market, which acts as a disciplining factor upon domestic producers, *and if it so happens at the same time that these potential entrants remain only potential entrants and do not overwhelm domestic producers on the home market, or at any rate not to a point where the country faces recurring trade deficits.* But, this as is well-known, is a tall order. Almost every single Eastern European economy which has introduced enterprise autonomy together with trade liberalisation has found itself in a position where it has had to incur heavy trade deficits that have eventually pushed it towards creating domestic unemployment. Trade liberalisation can be a direct cause of unemployment, in so far as domestic demand is switched from home products to foreign products; even when it does not directly create unemployment but only satisfies domestic excess demand at full employment, the growing debt which piles up as a result of recurring trade deficits eventually forces the country to adopt domestic deflation whose consequence is not only real wage-cuts but also unemployment. The case of Yugoslavia is of course an obvious one. The assumption that Yugoslavia, by importing western technology and capital, can use her cheap labour to capture export markets to such an extent that she can experience both growth as well as relative price stability, and be able to pay back her loans, or at any rate contain her debt, upon which her economic policy was based, has been shown to be an utterly untenable one; it has landed her in an economic crisis so profound that she now faces a combination of massive unemployment, an extraordinarily high rate of inflation, and a huge external debt, which together threaten to pull the country apart. Poland likewise pursued a regime of liberal imports, using similar theoretical justifications for it, namely that its relatively cheap labour, aided by Western technology, would enable it to capture substantial export markets. In point of fact, however, its domestic market simply absorbed vast amounts of western goods and it piled up, partly because of the recurring trade deficits and partly because of the very logic of borrowing, an enormous, external debt whose consequences are well-known. Hungary, whose economic reforms in the direction of both enterprise autonomy as well as trade liberalisation have been much talked about, appeared for a while to have been remarkably successful. But the picture is quite different now. Hungary's trade deficit vis-a-vis the western capitalist countries has grown. And the possibilities of offsetting this deficit through hard currency

exports to the Middle-East and elsewhere have shrunk because of subdued oil and other primary commodity prices. Hungary's commodity-trade pattern vis-a-vis the Western capitalist countries resembles that of a third world country, namely an exporter of food-stuffs and semi-manufactured goods and an importer of manufactured finished goods, while vis-a-vis the third world and other CMEA countries she is an exporter of a variety of sophisticated manufactured goods. EEC restrictions on food imports on the one hand and a relative shrinkage in the demand for Hungarian manufactures in third world markets on the other hand have combined to worsen her position in hard currency trade. The pressure for domestic deflation has, inevitably, mounted, and Hungary may soon find itself in the near future with noticeable unemployment.

At this point, two separate logical strands of the foregoing argument about the impact of trade liberalisation, should be distinguished. First, it is naive to believe that the export success of a country on the international market is merely a function of its relative economic 'efficiency' as a producer, however we choose to define that term. There is a strong element of power considerations in international trade, and hence political-strategic considerations enter into the decisions of major capitalist countries regarding how much access to allow into their own markets to the products of another country. There is an economic struggle for markets, which itself does not necessarily follow the rule 'the most-efficient-gets-the best-reward'; this struggle is tempered by political-strategic considerations. The idea that socialist countries can retain their socialist character, can articulate and act upon their socialist ideological positions, and yet get free access to capitalist markets by becoming more 'efficient' producers, is a naive one. Secondly, even assuming for a moment that this were not so, that world trade was determined entirely by the competitive rules of the game, there remains a problem of 'traverse'. Even if it could be postulated that a socialist country, after a number of years of running a trade deficit, would become competitive enough to capture international markets to an extent where it would manage to reverse the deficit, the debt piled up in the interim would put her in a position where she would be forced to accept 'conditionalities' of various kinds undermining her autonomy of decision-making. To say all this is not to assert that a socialist country cannot or should not trade at all with the capitalist world, that it cannot or should not take advantage of contradictions within capitalist countries to make an export effort, but merely to state that in today's world a socialist country would be forced into a situation of demand-constraint, if it went in for any notable degree of trade liberalisation.

The contradictions inherent in a regime where autonomous publicly-owned enterprises engage in exchange relations with one another within a socialist country, cannot therefore be overcome through trade liberalisation. If anything, these contradictions would be further

compounded by the additional introduction of a liberal trade regime. As an antidote to these contradictions, whose one manifestation, as argued above, would be accelerating inflation, the reform process which brought socialist commodity production into being would have to legitimise the existence of unemployment, *whether or not there is simultaneous trade liberalisation*. With trade liberalisation thrown in additionally, such legitimisation leading to the actual creation of unemployment would perhaps come even sooner than otherwise. Thus, inherent in the reform process is the creation of unemployment, and more generally the conversion of the system into a demand-constrained one, which, by Kornai's own argument, would amount to a negation of the historical achievement of socialism. The process which begins with the objective of removing one kind of slack, namely the slack engendered by the phenomenon of shortage, would end up by creating another kind of slack, namely the slack of unemployment and unutilised capacity, whose cost in terms of human degradation, loss of morale and insecurity would be far greater. Queueing up for doles is immeasurably more degrading than queueing up for goods especially in a situation where the latter is pervasive.

But, this is not all. Once we are in a demand-constrained system, the rate of growth of output becomes entirely dependent upon the future expectations of the firms regarding the growth of demand. Growth ceases to be a variable upon which any macro level control can be exercised. To be sure, the government can intervene to keep down the degree of unemployment or unutilised capacity through demand-management means as in a capitalist economy, but it can not influence the rate of accumulation by firms in the aggregate to an extent where it can effectively exercise control over the rate of growth.

It may appear at first sight rather intriguing that several features which are known to characterise a capitalist economy can possibly also reappear in a socialist economy with decentralised decision-making, even though *ex-hypothesi* there is no capitalist class, no private ownership of the means of production, and management of enterprises by the workers' collectives. But, capitalism as Marx had argued was characterised by two interlinked aspects: not only was it based on private ownership of the means of production, but it also entailed anarchy in decision-making. The entire process of transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism, and from monopoly capitalism, as it earlier was, to a situation of demand management by the State, as in the post-war years, still does not overcome this essential anarchy of a capitalist system, where the overall movement of the economy is the resultant of a series of scattered decisions, each independent of the others, and based only on an anticipation of what the overall movement would be. A socialist economy in which enterprises, even if not owned by capitalists, are autonomous in their decision-making and respond only to market signals, re-introduces the element of anarchy typical of capitalism. Not surprisingly therefore such an economy

would exhibit many of the characteristics of a capitalist economy. What Maurice Dobb had written on the subject in 1959 is still worth quoting today.

It is possible that a socialist economy could operate a decentralised mechanism for the determination of investment policy, whereby State enterprises made their investment plans as independent units according to some profit-criterion ... In such a situation the amount of actual constructional activity in progress, and hence the demand for and output of capital goods, will *not* be independent of price-relations, but will be influenced by the latter via the incomes of enterprises. A multiplier relation will exist between any initial change in investment which changes the incomes of enterprises . and subsequent expenditures of enterprises on further investment. Thereby an Harroldian cumulative tendency may be set up, and one that could be even greater than in a capitalist economy .. "11

III

The question arises: is a socialist then doomed to choose only between the two options, of persisting with a 'shortage-slack' economy on the one hand, or recreating certain features of capitalism such as unemployment, instability, the slack caused by a demand constraint, inequalities and inflation? If we accept Kornai's analysis, then it would appear that there are no alternatives except these two to choose from, since the economic reforms that logically follow from his analysis as the only means of overcoming the contradictions of a 'shortage-slack' economy, would, as I have argued, necessarily lead the economy to unemployment and a demand-constraint.

There is however a problem with Kornai's analysis. His basic presumption that in the absence of *financial* risks, the investment appetite of firms would necessarily produce a shortage economy appears to me to be untenable for two reasons: first, there can be non-market-imposed limits upon their investment demands, and secondly, there can be non-financial risks which the decision-makers in a firm can be made to face which curbs their investment appetite. The simplest example of a non-market-imposed limit upon investment is where the investment undertaken by a firm is given by fiat, from the Central Planning Authority. True, even in such a case, if the firm has some autonomy with respect to its inventory accumulation decision, its unlimited appetite for such accumulation can, in the aggregate, result in perpetual shortage and self-fulfilling expectations, as Kornai suggests. But if the norms for such accumulation too are centrally-determined then there is no *logical* reason why a shortage situation should persist. I am not suggesting that this is in any sense a desirable way of controlling overall investment, but simply that the validity of

Kornai's analysis depends crucially upon the assumption that any *discretionary* macro-control over the level of aggregate demand is absent in the socialist economy. In fact his stylisation of the economy is, to say the least, rather peculiar: it is seen already as being only an agglomeration of autonomous firms, each operating without a budget constraint, and the whole presided over by a centre which acts, at best, like an automaton following certain set rules for controlling the economy. But if we do allow for discretionary macro-control over firms' investment demand, there is no reason in principle why shortage should be constantly reproduced. To be sure, no such control mechanism can possibly result in a fine tuning of the economy, but the glaring phenomena of shortage and slack can be considerably minimised.

Two questions would arise here. The first is: unless firms are made financially autonomous and hence responsible, i.e. unless their freedom from having to bear financial risks is eliminated, can any system of macro-level control be made effective? What other disciplining mechanism other than having to bear financial losses, can be conceived that checks the insatiable investment appetite of firms? Here one can point to a variety of non-financial risks, from loss of reputation to public criticism to demotion which the management of a firm can be made to face in case they violate centrally-prescribed 'norms'. In fact these non-financial risks are not as feeble as they appear at first sight. they play a crucial role in Kornai's own analysis, and hence, by implication, perhaps in the Eastern European reality. When Kornai talks of the 'pressure' from 'superior authorities', 'the banking-system' and 'economic public opinion' acting upon firms to exercise self-restraint in periods of intensive shortage, which in his view prevents the shortage situation from becoming explosive, what else is he referring to but non-financial risks of expansion? And if such pressures keep the system operating at a 'normal' level of shortage, what is there to prevent this 'normal' from being shifted close to zero?

This brings us to the second question: the responses of the planning authorities after all are conditioned, their apparently discretionary behaviour is itself deterministic, which is what makes a descriptive analysis of the system possible; how can their discretionary behaviour then be expected to undergo a transformation? If their responses are conditioned by a certain notion of the 'normal', and this 'normal' itself incorporates a combination of perennial shortage and slack, what impulse is there to shift this 'normal' shortage situation to one of zero shortage? A moment's reflection however would show that this question is really beside the point. In talking about reforms, we are already necessarily postulating a changed behaviour on the part of the authorities, or rather a changed set of authorities, who are not bound any longer by the deterministic behaviour responses of the past. There is no logical reason why in the new situation, the perennial prevalence of shortage should be broken only by granting financial autonomy to enterprises, and not by other means, such as mobilising 'economic public

opinion' *inter alia*, to bring down the so-called 'normal' level of shortage.

A point should be clarified here about the entire preceding discussion. We have so far been talking about the macro-economy and the inefficiency which arises on account of a perennial macro-shortage. To put it differently, the preceding discussion would apply to a world where there is just one commodity. This notion of inefficiency arising from a macro-shortage has to be distinguished from the notion of allocational inefficiency which would arise in a multi-commodity world. The merit of Kornai's argument is that it draws attention, to the former kind of inefficiency, as distinct from allocational inefficiency, for it is only on the basis of the former kind of inefficiency that a case for reforms aimed at granting autonomy to enterprises can be built up. Nobody can conceivably argue that enterprises engaged in exchange relations on the market can achieve allocational efficiency. The relationship between a free market and allocational efficiency which is captured in the theorems of welfare economics holds only under conditions of perfect competition, and that too in a static sense. The case for introducing a free market on grounds of allocational efficiency in a real economy therefore does not exist. But such a case can conceivably be made on altogether different grounds, on an altogether different notion of efficiency, which is why I have spent so much time examining Kornai's particular argument.

To deny the validity of this argument, as I have done, does not therefore mean that the quest for greater allocational efficiency within the planning system should not continue, or that decentralization of decision-making, *with this end in view* should not be undertaken. What the contours of such a decentralised system should be, how prices, whether actual or accounting, should be fixed, and how the decisions regarding the rate and pattern of accumulation and the choice of techniques should be undertaken, are matters on which a voluminous literature exists that I shall not be going into.¹² They are serious problems to be solved in a socialist economy, and reforms of the system aimed at improving its allocational efficiency should be undertaken. But the current reforms have nothing to do with allocational efficiency, since the introduction of a free market on which socialist enterprises trade with one another does not contribute to an improvement of allocational efficiency.

As Joan Robinson expressed the matter

The claim that is made for the imitation market system is at two levels. First, that it indicates the correct plan for production—the plan that ensures that the maximum benefit is enjoyed from given resources. Second, that it promotes efficiency by permitting the devolution of decisions. On both levels, it is argued, the best results will be achieved if individual enterprises are instructed to

behave like capitalists in the text-books, that is, to strive to maximise profits from moment to moment.

The first point to observe is that, for the system to achieve the results claimed for it, *the enterprises must not be given freedom over the prices at which they sell*. The drawback of endowing socialist enterprises with the powers of capitalist monopolies are obvious enough. (They have been experienced to some extent in Yugoslavia.)¹³

The current reforms aim precisely at giving the enterprises freedom over the prices at which they sell, and hence even *in theory* cannot be claimed to be promoting allocational efficiency.

As regards the other kind of inefficiency which Kornai talks about, my argument has been that greater discretionary macro-controls over investment demand are needed, together with disciplining devices of a non-market kind, rather than enterprise autonomy. I shall now turn briefly to this question of discipline, an important constituent of which is work-discipline.

IV

Under capitalism, work discipline is enforced through the market. But, for the market to play this role, there has to be a reserve army of labour, which is why capitalism can never succeed in maintaining permanent full employment: the 'fear of the sack' would lose its sting in a regime of full employment. The question which arises is: if under feudalism work-discipline is enforced through the monseigneur's wrath, and under capitalism through the fear of the 'sack', what would be the mechanism for enforcing work-discipline under socialism? The answer which Marx and Engels had to this question, is clear, namely the collective commitment of the workers to work for the society which they have established through their own revolutionary action. When Marx wrote in *The Poverty of Philosophy* that 'of all the instruments of production, the greatest productive power is the revolutionary class itself', this remark had a dual meaning for him. He meant not only that 'the organisation of revolutionary elements as a class supposes the existence of all the productive forces which could be engendered in the bosom of the old society',¹⁴ but also that the further development of the productive forces in the new society must be based on the revolutionary energy of this class itself.

This is not just a flight of fancy, a hopelessly romantic day-dream of what could be possible under socialism; it is a logical complement of the very conception of socialism itself. In practice of course in socialist countries, work-discipline is poor which is an important reason for inefficiency. But the point is: a specifically socialist effort to solve this problem of a socialist economy must take the form of exploring

ways to energise the working class, of creating appropriate institutions for the active participation of the working class in economic and political life, and not of re-establishing the reserve army and the fear of the 'sack', which are reversions to capitalist methods and constitute a retreat from socialism.¹⁵ To be sure many of the social and political changes being introduced in the socialist countries as a part of the reform would result in a reversal of the process of depoliticisation of the working class which underlies the economic predicament of these countries today. These changes are important and welcome, but it would be a mistake to believe that democratisation in the political sphere and re-establishment of market relationships are somehow complementary to one another, and constitute an intrinsically coherent package of policies. Precisely the opposite in fact is true, as the experience of third world countries has demonstrated repeatedly. Economic liberalisation, i.e. the so-called 'freer play of market forces', which invariably is associated with trade liberalisation as well, brings in its train phenomena such as growing external debt, currency devaluation, domestic deflation, etc., whose political fall-out is a curtailment of the democratic rights of the working people. Thus, in order to strengthen the democratisation process in socialist countries, which also holds the key to their economic revival and advance along the socialist path, it is important to recognise the misconceived nature of the present economic reforms that are going along with it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 The two main works of Janos Kornai which I use in this paper are *Economics of Shortage*, Amsterdam 1980 (2 volumes), and *Growth, Shortage and Efficiency*, Oxford, 1982. In addition there is a useful early article 'Resource-Constrained Versus Demand-Constrained Systems', which is the text of his Presidential Address to the Econometrics Society, published in *Econometrica* 47 (1979), pp 801-820. As will be made clear later in the text, in talking about the 'slack' in resource use, Kornai focuses on an altogether novel concept of inefficiency, which one may call 'inefficiency of indiscipline' as distinct from the usual notion of 'allocative inefficiency', since it is this concept which gives some theoretical intelligibility to the current reforms. I discuss Kornai's work in some detail in the present paper.
- 2 Kornai, 1982, p. 90 ff.
- 3 Ibid, p. 108.
- 4 Ibid, 1982, pp. 91-92.
- 5 This of course is not the only aspect, or even the most notable one, of the reforms. Simultaneously there are important changes being introduced in the form of private leases in agriculture, cooperative enterprises, and even legalisation of wage-labour on a significant scale in privately-run farms and non-farm production units. All these reforms have far-reaching consequences for the future of the socialist economy. If I do not discuss these aspects in the present paper, the reason lies in the fact that their implications are well-known and most people would agree on them, including even the proponents of the reforms, who however consider the risk worth-taking. There is however less theoretical agreement, and also less theoretical discussion, on the implications of autonomy for socialist enterprises. I concentrate therefore upon the theoretical implications of this particular reform, or, looking at it differently, upon the implications of the reform process seen at its best, i.e. even abstracting from that particular aspect of reforms which introduces non-socialist forms of property relationships.

- 6 See in this context Ashok Mitra, *Terms of Trade and Class Relations* London, 1977, ch 1
- 7 Joan Robinson in her 'Philosophy of Prices,' published in *Collected Economic Papers* Volume 2, drew a distinction between two different kinds of prices. In one situation there is mobility of capital and labour across sectors and the price of the sector's product is such as to ensure for workers the average wage and for capital the average rate of profit which prevails elsewhere, in the other situation, characterising in her view the agricultural sector in particular, the sector is insulated and its price is not linked to any such average. In conditions of monopoly, especially the type of monopoly that would emerge under socialist commodity production, each sector according to my argument would behave as if it were an insulated sector
- 8 See R E Rowthorn 'Conflict, Inflation and Money,' *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1977
- 9 I have argued in my paper 'Terms of Trade and the Rate of Inflation' (mimeo) that the primary-producing sector often provides in capitalist conditions, and has provided in India in recent years, such a cushion against an acceleration of inflation
- 10 And if this counteracting tendency, though existent is not strong enough, the economy may end up with both widening inequalities as well as an acceleration of inflation at a rate more gentle than would have been the case otherwise
- 11 Maurice Dobb, *An Essay on Economic Growth and Planning* (1960), reprinted by MR Press, New York, p 4
- 12 Reference may be made to Maurice Dobb's *Welfare Economics and the Economics of Socialism* (London 1969) for a review of the issues
- 13 Joan Robinson, 'Consumers' Sovereignty in a Planned Economy' in *Essays in Honour of Oskar Lange*, Warsaw, 1964, reprinted in the *Collected Economic Papers*, Vol 3
- 14 Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* in *Collected Works* Vol 6, p 211
- 15 It is noteworthy that the most successful capitalist country of today, namely Japan, has eschewed the use of the usual capitalist method of enforcing work-discipline, and some even attribute its success to this very fact. See M Morishima, *Why Has Japan Succeeded?* London 1982. It is ironic that socialist economists are seeing the virtues of market coercion as a means of enforcing work-discipline when successful capitalism has transcended it

UTSA PATNAIK*

Peasants and Industrialisation in the Soviet Union

INTRODUCTION

The Russian revolution has raised issues far deeper, has stirred conflicts more violent, and has unleashed forces far larger than those that had been involved in the greatest social upheavals of the past. And yet the revolution has by no means come to a close. It is still on the move. It may still surprise us by its sharp and sudden turns. It is still capable of redrawing its own perspective. The ground we are entering is one which historians either fear to tread, or tread with fear.

These prophetic words were spoken by Isaac Deutscher over twenty years ago, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution of 1917. The last two years have indeed seen a 'sharp and sudden turn' in the course of development of the first socialist country in the world, in policies relating to every sphere, from foreign policy to economic growth strategy to cultural matters. These 'sharp and sudden turns' have caught unawares not only the Third World observers hitherto habituated to thinking of the Soviet Union in politically static terms; it has caught unawares the mass of Soviet citizens, called upon unexpectedly to exercise the faculties of critical engagement and debate.

Perestroika or 'restructuring' is only a part, no doubt a basic and crucial part, of the new vision of socialism which is sought to be developed in Russia today, and it is integrally linked to a 'redrawing of perspective' with regard to the position of the Soviet Union in the internationaleconomy. Some aspects of these 'sharp and sudden turns' in policies have evoked dismay and anger among many Marxists in the Third World in the same proportion as they have been greeted enthusiastically by Marxists in the advanced capitalist countries. Our objective must be to try to comprehend, on the basis of critical analysis, the rationale behind the reforms, proposed and actual, 'summed up by perestroika in the thinking and perception of the Soviet –

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scholars and planners. This paper has the limited objective of looking at trends of development in the agrarian sector and the rationale of land leases to farming households, now being put forward as the solution to the problem of lagging productivity. We begin in the first part with a brief overview of the problems and debates of a crucial period preceding collectivisation; the second part discusses trends in the post-war period, and the contemporary problems which have given rise to the proposals for reform.

The 'Worker-Peasant Link' in a Closed Economy undergoing Industrialisation in the Inter-War Period.

Of the three decades of industrialisation after the Revolution, 1917-1947, a surprisingly short and discontinuous period comprised years of anything approaching normal development, undisturbed directly by war or intervention, or indirectly by the aftermath of severe earlier dislocation: not more than perhaps fifteen to sixteen years. Following the Revolution, the immense economic hardships imposed by the war, followed by civil war and foreign intervention to throttle the fledgling socialist state (in which Indian troops also participated) are well known, as are the contours of War Communism enforced by these circumstances, entailing grain requisitions from the peasantry. The story of the crisis of market supplies and the inception of NEP are also well known. The output of grain and all other agricultural commodities declined from the pre-World War I levels during these difficult years. The annual level of grain output for the quinquennium ending 1913, was not recaptured until the early 1920's, over a decade later. The proportion of total output marketed declined from the pre-War level of 24 to 26 per cent, to only half of this, and had recovered by 1926-7 to around 17 to 20 per cent according to one estimate, and only 13 to 14 per cent by another estimate (This is considerably lower than the 30-33 per cent marketed by Indian peasants in 1951).

As a consequence of effective land redistribution improving the economic position of the peasants (enabling them to retain more food for their own consumption) as well as the dislocation of trade, the marketed portion of output thus did not rise in the recovery phase at the same rate as did total output. The very success of the agrarian revolution in breaking up land monopoly, liberating the peasantry from the burden of rent and usury interest, and improving the resource base of the majority, thus led to relatively increased domestic absorption of foodgrains in the rural sector, met partly by the decline in exports and partly by decline in sales to non-agriculture. (Export of grain fell from 9.6 m. tons in 1913 to 2m. tons by 1925-26). This in turn generated a severe problem for industrialisation with respect to the availability of food for urban areas and for non-agricultural enterprise generally. In the background of a necessarily strong emphasis on building up heavy industries and producers goods for strategic defensive reasons, and a virtual famine of manufactured goods for consumption, there was little

prospect of inducing the peasants to sell more for money if that money could not be exchanged against manufactured goods entering into their consumption. These goods remained and were expected to remain in chronic short supply for some time to come. Yet rapid growth of industry was vital for the very survival of the socialist system and of Soviet power; for the rapid growth of industry self-financing was inadequate and resources had to be transferred from agriculture through taxation; matched by an excess of supplies from agriculture over its absorption of goods from non-agriculture, attained by keeping manufactured goods prices higher than those which would have prevailed under free-market conditions. (On occasion 'socialist legality' was also violated and products confiscated, as we will see) These basic contradictions arising in the industrialisation of a backward economy surrounded by hostile capitalist powers, worked themselves out in forms which entailed not only heavy economic but political costs. Yet it is difficult to see an alternative scenario given the circumstances.

With base year 1913, the terms of trade by 1925-26 shows a 56 per cent shift against agriculture. It was estimated that while grain sales totalled 18-19 m. tons in 1914, in 1926 they were only 10 m. tons. The bulk of supplies came from some 34 m. peasant holdings while less than 10 per cent came from the small, though growing sector of large-scale socialised production represented by the *kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy*.

Table 1 Marketed Grain by Source

Year	Grain Contributed by			Grain Marketed/Total Output			
	Collective + State farms	Peasant Households	Total	Collective Farms	State Farms	House- holds	All
1927	0 67(7 6)	8 1 (92 4)	8 7 (100 0)	35 4	63 6	16 8	17 7
1928	0 85(11 3)	6 6(88 7)	7 6(100 00)	39 9	68 2	14 7	16 1
1929	1 51(14 0)	9 2(86 0)	10 7(100 0)	42 8	62 4	19 9	21 7

Source Table 6, Carr & Davies, 1969, p 999

The intensive debates which took place during the period regarding the policy to be followed vis-a-vis the well-to-do peasants (kulaks and better off middle peasants) who contributed the bulk of the marketed surplus, tended to focus almost exclusively on the price question. This was made more complex by the fact that in the absence of complete socialised control over trade and distribution under the prevalent NEP regime any concession by way of raised agricultural prices or lowered manufactured goods prices did not automatically benefit fully the peasant producers: the gap between wholesale and retail prices became an important variable to consider in addition to the question of agricultural goods prices versus manufactured goods prices. The planners were acutely conscious of the contradiction between the imperatives of industrialisation on the one hand, and the

requirement of maintaining the worker-peasant link on the other. Deteriorating terms of trade for agriculture were as unpopular with the small and middle peasants as with the kulaks, despite all the minutely discussed and real economic differentiation within the peasantry, the latter showed a disconcerting tendency to react as one when it came to matters of centrally imposed taxation or rise in prices of manufactured goods relative to those of agricultural goods.

The *dvors* or peasant households were classified as follows

Table 2 *Categories of Peasant Households*

Social Class	No of Households Million	Population Million	No of Members per Household
Poor Peasants	5.20	22.4	4.3
Middle Peasants	13.90	76.7	5.5
Kulaks	0.78	5.0	6.3
All	19.88	104.1	5.2

Source Carr + Davies, p 121

The legal definition of a kulak 'was a household which systematically employed hired labour; or owned a mill or other manufacturing establishment, or systematically lent out complex machines, or systematically leased buildings for residential or industrial purposes; or whose members engaged in trade, or non-agricultural occupations. Additionally there were the *batraks*, landless hands employed by kulaks.

The cooperative principle and large-scale collective and state-run production in agriculture were represented by the various marketing and service cooperatives, the *kolkhozy* and the *sovkhhozy* respectively. The idea was that more and more peasant households would be gradually drawn into cooperative marketing, investment and eventually production, on a voluntary basis: Lenin had envisaged a time-scale of decades over which this was to be achieved. The *kolkhozy* comprised three main institutional forms: the communes, the *artels*, and the *TOZy*. The communes had been formed in the years immediately after the Revolution and represented not only communal ownership of assets and communal production, but communal living as well; the *artels* were primarily engaged in joint production by members, without joint living, while the *TOZy* represented the lowest forms of cooperation of all with only part of the area under collective production. The average size of the *kolkhoz* was very small in this period and the institution was not comparable to the later *kolkhoz* which developed after the collectivisation campaign of the 1930's under Stalin. The average *kolkhoz* before 1930 had around 15 households with under 100 total population and did not operate more than 200 ha of land. The *sovkhhozy* or state-run farms were much larger.

In addition there were large numbers of marketing and service cooperatives of various kinds, ranging from these handling sale of specific commercial crops and dairy products, to loose associations for purchase of machinery, purchase of seeds, improvement of land etc., some of which were loosely classified as *kolkhozy*. There were functioning cooperatives which were not registered, as well as 'dead souls', viz. defunct cooperatives with a purely statistical existence. There were also credit cooperatives. By and large the service and credit cooperatives were utilised by the well-to-do peasants to secure inputs, machinery and credit and market their surpluses. The planners regarded these latter forms of cooperation as not necessarily socialist in character and even as serving to strengthen the kulak, while the *kolkhozy* to which mainly middle and small peasants belonged, were sought to be turned over time into collective asset-owning and production cooperatives on a full-fledged basis.

In the fluid and developing situation of the late twenties, a wide range of viewpoints found expression in the debates regarding policy. The non-party intellectuals of neo-Narodnik hue, A.V. Chayanov and other members of his 'production and organization school' such as Makarov and Chelintsev, were firmly convinced of the viability of small-scale production, underplayed peasant differentiation, and advocated the looser forms of service and credit cooperation. (Chayanov at this time headed the Scientific Research Institute of Agricultural Economics). Among the party economists and theorists there was the well-known sharp division on the question of policies towards the peasantry, initially between Bukharin, Rykov and Stalin on the one hand, and Ossovsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky, on the other. Up to the end of 1927 Stalin concurred with Bukharin's basic position that the mass of peasants as allies of the working class, could not be subjected to increased pressure through fiscal and price policies.

E. Preobrazhensky had read his paper on 'The Fundamental Law of Socialist Accumulation' in August 1924 and his *Novaya Ekonomika* was published two years later, putting forward the theses on the necessity of the use of taxation and price policy to transfer agricultural surpluses to finance industrialisation. Bukharin launched an attack on Preobrazhensky's arguments, in a long review article in *Pravda* and this was followed by critical articles by a number of other authors. Bukharin is reported to have described Zinoviev and Trotsky's positions in the 15th party conference of 1926 as flowing directly from the arguments of Preobrazhensky, the theorist of the opposition, and accused them of wishing to 'plunder the peasantry.' (Ossovsky, who advocated the raising of industrial prices as a means of enforced extraction of peasant surplus, was expelled from the party in August 1926). Given the acceptance of the theoretical framework of NEP, Bukharin was formally correct and was also in a strong position to discount any 'grain strike' by the kulaks because the 1926 harvest was

good, and grain procurement by the state was better than in the previous year.

A radical change in the official position was forced however with the crisis of 1927-28 which weakened Bukharin's arguments and led to the adoption of many of the 'opposition' policies such as increased taxation of the peasants as proposed by Trotsky. In the autumn of 1927 the state's grain collections were considerably below the corresponding collections in the previous year, particularly so in the regions which had enjoyed a good harvest. Since the state had little reserves to fall back on, draconian measures were resorted to prosecution of peasant 'hoarders' under Article 170 and confiscation of hoarded grain with a provision that one-quarter of confiscations should be distributed to poor peasants at low prices. Rykov's pleas for the observance of 'socialist legality' were evidently not heeded in many cases and even middle peasants were subjected to this type of pressure. By early 1928, Stalin (who was on a tour of W. Siberia to see that these measures were implemented) was speaking at length on the contradiction of continuing to combine socialised industry with small-scale peasant agriculture, and how it was 'indispensable to pass on from socialisation of industry to socialisation of agriculture'—from 'small peasant households to large-scale collectives'.

The peasantry responded with reduced sowings of grain area. Those theorists who now advocated raising grain prices to induce larger sales and in order to prevent further peasant alienation, were opposed by Stalin who argued that increased food prices at this juncture would retard industrialisation and that for the present the tribute (*dan*) levied on the peasants through low prices and administrative methods of collection, was necessary. Thus in the space of a year Stalin had come around to the 'opposition' argument hitherto put forward by Trotsky, which caused only minor embarrassment and had the longer-run effect of taking the wind out of the Trotskyite opposition sails. Though on this issue Stalin did not carry the day (prices payable to peasants were raised), very soon afterwards a tax campaign was launched which greatly increased direct taxation of *kulaks* while exempting the poorest 35 per cent of peasants. The estimated tax collection from this source was to be as much as one-third higher, Rb. 400 m. compared to Rb. 300 m. the previous year. Difficulties of grain collection continued, and a legal provision was invoked under which land exclusively cultivated with hired labour was liable to confiscation. The *kulaks* stepped up physical violence against *kolkhozy* by destroying equipment and crops, and refusing to employ *batraks* engaging in trade union work. The 'struggle for grain' and the class-struggle in the countryside were tending to merge.

By the summer of 1929 the leadership had committed itself to collectivisation but the time-scale was still seen in terms of at least a decade or more. The first five-year plan envisaged the expansion of *kolkhozy* and *sovkhhozy* from 2.3 m. ha. in 1927-8 to 27 m. ha. by 1933

At the end of 1929 however, the decision was taken to introduce wholesale collectivisation.

Before leaving this cursory account of the developments leading up to collectivisation, mention must be made of the *contractatsiya* or contract system. Before the Revolution, sugar factories had the practice of signing contracts for the delivery of sugar beet with peasants against cash advances. This system was converted to one of state procurement agencies contracting with households and cooperatives for the major commercial crops (cotton, sugarbeet, sunflower, potatoes) against advances, either interest free or carrying a low interest. The contracts were much more than only purchase contracts as they included stipulations for the supply of seeds and sometimes machines. From the end of 1928 the contract system was extended to grain. Covering nearly 2 m. peasant households by the end of 1927, *contractatsiya* was seen as a powerful method of disseminating improved techniques and organisation through the inputs and technical advice provided, and was soon linked up also with farm mechanisation. Specialised 'tractor-columns' had already been formed in the *sovkhozhy* for ploughing not only state-owned lands but also peasant land under contracts and these presaged the later MTS (machine-tractor stations). Three types of such tractor columns had come into existence—those attached to *sovkhozy*, those under cooperatives and those working independently for land communities. Opposition to mechanised ploughing and the MST came from the kulaks in the form of propaganda (that the tractor was the 'steel horse on which anti-christ came to earth'). The area under *contractatsiya* expanded rapidly. In some respects recent proposals for household and group contracts for output delivery in the Soviet Union today recall the *contractatsiya* prevalent before wholesale collectivisation during 1930-33.

As may be seen from Table 3, there was a marked drop in production during the period 1933-39, particularly in meat, milk, eggs and wool and to a lesser extent in grain output. This was primarily a consequence of the kulak attempt to sabotage collectivisation by reducing sown area and slaughtering livestock, and partly a result of bad harvest years in 1932 and 1933 resulting in famine in some areas. Subsequently however growth picked up well (This scenario was repeated in China during 1958 to 1961 when the transition to large-scale communes took place, though sabotage played no role there). While it is possible to deprecate the suddenness with which collectivisation took place, and consequently its coercive character vis-a-vis not only the kulaks but also other sections of the peasantry insufficiently prepared ideologically to 'give up' the land they had won through struggle only fifteen years earlier, there is on the other side, the question of fascist invasion. As always, time was short; it is a moot question whether, without the undoubtedly harsh but retrospectively perhaps necessary decision to collectivise rapidly, the Soviet Union would have been able

to withstand the fascist onslaught which was launched from Hitlerite Germany less than a decade later. Despite the enemy occupation of

Table 3 Annual Average Output of Main Agricultural Products, 1909-1940

Period (Annual average)	Grain m. ton	Sugar Beet m ton	Raw Cotton m. ton	Sunflower Seed m ton	Potatoes m ton
1909-13	65.2	9.7	0.68	0.70	22.4
1928-32	73.6	9.8	1.00	1.80	45.9
1933-37	72.9	14.6	1.80	1.30	49.8
1936-40	77.9	15.8	2.50	2.00	47.9
	Meat m ton	Milk m ton	Eggs (000m)	Wool (000 ton)	
1909-13	3.9	24.1	9.5	180	
1928-32	4.3	26.3	8.0	135	
1933-37	2.7	22.2	5.8	83	
1936-40	4.5	27.6	10.8	146	

Source Lukinov, p-3

vast agriculturally rich areas (in Ukraine, Byelorussia, Baltic provinces and black earth regions) collectivised agriculture in the rest of the country was able to step up output to compensate partially and to provision the workers and soldiers by greatly stepping up deliveries, undoubtedly at great sacrifice to the producers. But in the face of foreign invasion, the peasant in his new incarnation as collective farm worker did not complain.

Postwar Trends of Agricultural Growth and the Proposed Reforms

Compared to an average annual production of 77.9 m. tons grain in the quinquennium ending 1940, the output level in 1943 was only around 36 m. tons. With the liberation of occupied territories the output level rose steadily but was still only 57 m. tons or so in 1945. This is not surprising considering the systematic 'scorched earth' policy following by the defeated and retreating fascist forces, and the physical liquidation of a large part of the able-bodied workers. In course of the anti-fascist war some 20 m. Soviet citizens lost their lives directly, the overwhelming majority being men. (This would be roughly equivalent to the death of 70 m. Indians today, in terms of proportion to total population). Taking the indirect effects of abnormally low birth rate and higher mortality, the loss is about 50 m. There were acute manpower shortages in agriculture, aggravated by the fact that lakhs of demobbed soldiers flocked to urban areas rather than returning to their villages. It took several years to restore agricultural production to the pre-war level, while continuing low prices of the products of this sector combined with high taxation remained an important part of the mechanism of financing reconstruction of the war-devastated national economy and financing the new spurt in industrial growth including the

race for the mastery of space. Reconstruction of devastated historical monuments continues to this day.

Not until a decade after the end of the War, were some reforms and relief measures introduced by way of lower rates of taxation on State farms and collectives, and increased purchase prices. The reason that the peasants, in their two-decade long incarnation as collective farm workers, showed no overt resentment of the emphasis on accumulation for industrialisation financed in substantial measure out of low rates or rise of their incomes, lay precisely in the dramatic success of Soviet industrialisation. The occupational distribution of the workforce altered drastically in the span of a single generation! While in 1927 three-quarters of all workers were employed in agriculture, by the end of the fifties, three decades later this proportion had dropped to below two-fifths and by 1967 to one-quarter only. The absolute number of workers employed in agriculture declined by at least a quarter during the period 1959 to 1977. Yesterdays rural peasant became today's urban worker or even technically trained professional. Universal literacy and education transformed the cultural level. Occupational mobility was accompanied by large-scale migration, both rural to urban, and from west to east, to the expanding economic frontier of Siberia. Rapid urbanisation (town dwellers rose from 18 per cent in 1926 to 62 per cent by 1977) combined with absolute decline in the numbers employed in agriculture obviously entailed a substantial rise in labour productivity. This was achieved by a planned increase in relative investment allocations to the agricultural sector from the 1960's. This was all the more necessary as the sixties was the period of the missing generation of young workers-the unborn cohorts of 1940-45 who would have joined the work-force at this time and whose absence distorted the size and age-structure of the work-force substantially.

Comparing the Soviet Union's urbanisation with the USA's, Deutscher remarks: 'In the U.S. . . it took a full century from 1850 to 1950, for the proportion of the town dwellers to rise from 15 to 60 per cent. Throughout those hundred years the phenomenal growth of the

Table 4

Per Cent of Urban to Total Population	
1927	18
1939	33
1959	46
1977	62

American cities and towns was stimulated and facilitated by mass immigration, influx of foreign capital and skill, and immunity from foreign invasion and wartime destruction. . . . Soviet urbanisation, in tempo and scale, is without parallel in history. Such a change in social structure, even if it had taken place in more favourable circumstances,

would have created huge and baffling problems in housing, settlement, health and education, and Soviet circumstances were as if designed to intensify and magnify beyond measure the turmoil and the shocks (p. 43).

As table 5 and the accompanying graphs based on it indicate, the growth rate agricultural production was fairly respectable in the

Table 5 Annual Average Output of Main Agricultural Products, 1940-1987 (M ton)

Year/Period	Vegetables	Grain	Raw Cotton	Sugar-beet	Sunflower Seeds	Potatoes
1940	95.6	2.24	18.0	3.22	76.1	13.7
1956-60	121.5	4.36	45.6	4.10	88.3	15.1
1961-65	130.3	4.99	59.2	5.70	81.6	16.9
1966-70	167.6	6.10	81.1	7.18	94.8	19.5
1971-75	181.6	7.67	76.0	6.69	89.8	23.0
1976-80	205.0	8.55	88.7	6.04	82.6	26.3
1981-85	180.3	8.31	76.4	5.71	78.4	29.2
1986	210.1	8.23	79.3	6.23	87.2	29.7
1987	211.3	8.10	90.0	6.10	75.9	29.1

Year/Period	Meat M. ton.	Eggs (000 m)	Wool (000 ton)	Milk (m ton)
1940	4.7	12.2	161.1	33.6
1956-60	7.9	23.6	317.0	57.2
1961-65	9.3	28.7	361.6	64.7
1966-70	11.5	35.8	397.8	80.5
1971-75	14.0	51.4	424.8	87.4
1976-80	14.8	63.1	441.5	92.7
1981-85	16.2	74.4	457.2	94.6
1986	18.1	80.7	469.1	102.2
1987	18.6	82.1	455.0	103.4

sixties and seventies. Grain output rose from an annual average of around 120 m. tons in the five-year period ending 1960 to 205 m. tons in the five-year period ending 1980. (This gives a per capita production figure of 800 kg. annually or four times the present Indian level of per capita production.) In the decade of the eighties however, grain production has dipped alarmingly during 1980-85 and the recovery of 1986 and 1987 remains inadequate. It is clear that a trend line fitted to the data for the sixties and seventies cannot be extrapolated for there is a distinct downward shift of the trend in the eighties. Production of other crops, particularly of sugar-beet and vegetables similarly did well until the last decade, when a marked stagnation is observed. Livestock products like milk and meat however have shown a steadier growth lasting into the eighties. While bad weather conditions occurring in statistically improbable succession can be blamed in some part for the foodgrains debacle of the eighties, it does not provide the full answer. The import of foodgrains constituted 20 to 22 per cent of domestic production in recent years. It may be noted that despite the decline in the first half of the eighties the per capita grain production

works out to 740 kg., more than three times the level in our country. There is in fact no shortage of grain for bread but there is an almost chronic shortage of high-grade fodder crops. Nearly 40 per cent of grain output consists of grain going into livestock feed, as given the cold climate and for cultural reasons the requirement and demand for meat consumption is high. Meat availability per capita has been raised 31 per cent between 1991 and 1986 to 62.4 kg. annually and it is mainly in order to sustain this that imports are undertaken.

Those observers who compare unfavourably the considerably lower levels of use of fertiliser and pesticides per hectare in Soviet agriculture with the high levels applied in N. American agriculture, reveal a lack of appreciation of the problem of soil-types in the Soviet Union. Nearly one-third of the land area is under *podzols*, all varieties of which are characterised by severe leaching as a result of which easily soluble substances are washed out of the upper strata which becomes devoid of nutrients. Even with respect to the soils which can take fertilisers, the long-run problems engendered by heavy application of fertilisers and pesticides which result in the build-up of toxic chemical residues in the tissues of animals and their products, and get further concentrated in the bodies of final consumers are being increasingly recognised. What is basically required in our view in the Soviet Union is not an aping of US chemicals-based food production technologies (which have resulted in an enormous glut of tasteless wheat and mildly toxic animal products), but the development of more intensive convertible husbandry practices to raise the output of animal proteins while providing more organic matter for enriching soils, and raising crop yields.

From 1965 there has been a marked shift in the structure of investment in favour of agriculture, reflected in a rise in productive assets per worker and power used per worker. Systematic efforts have been made to improve cultural and medical facilities in the rural areas to arrest the flight from the land of the brightest and most qualified young people. The two basic large-scale production unit-types, the *kolkhoz* and the *sovkhoz*, had the following characteristics in 1987 in terms of area and productive assets. The Soviet economists refer to the 'agro-industrial complex' or AIC for the collectivised agricultural sector since by now it includes over 31,000 enterprises either related to agro-processing and manufacture of inputs and machinery, or rendering services. These enterprises, and institutions themselves also operate their own subsidiary farms with an average area of 250 ha. The 35 m. households on the collective and state farms have their private plots which concentrate on potatoes, vegetables and livestock products (pigs, sheep and poultry), which can be profitably raised on a small area. They contribute as much as one-fourth of the state purchases of potatoes and wool and 7 per cent of vegetables. Additionally they sell directly to consumers on the market. The total labour-force was 38.9 m. workers in 1986.

Table 6

	Collective Farm Kolkhoz	State farm Sovkhoz	Percentage of Total Production from Kolkhoz + Sovkhoz Private		
1 Number	26,700	22,900			
2 Cultivated area, ha	6500	15,900	Grain	99	1
3 Head of Cattle	1954	1873	Sugar	100	0
4 Pigs	1133	1196	Flax	100	0
5 Tractors	46	58	Cotton	100	0
Grains combines	14	19	Sunflower	98	2
			Livestock product	71-76	24-29
			Vegetable	70	30
			Potatoes	40	60

Source I Lukinov, 1988, and T E
Kuznetsova, 1988. Items 2 to 5 give
the average per collective and state farm

Source I Lukinov, 1988

The rapid mechanisation of certain branches of production from 1965 onwards has raised labour-productivity, but economists are worried over the recent rise in the incremental capital-output ratio. While 91 per cent of collective farms operated at a profit, 18 per cent of state farms incurred losses (The state farms pay wages to workers, while collective farms share income among their members on the basis of work put in). On average the income of state farm workers was 20 per cent higher than that of collective farm workers).

Proposals for the reform of relations within the collective sector and for the introduction of stronger material incentives, are not new. Attacks have been launched in the past on the 'levelling' effect of the system of income-sharing on collectives, and various schemes of contracting for output delivery with smaller units—teams and groups of households, with bonus payments for overfulfilment of targets, have been in force for some time. Where payment to collective farm members are based on work-points rather than on net output, unsatisfactory working of the system can theoretically arise at several points. It is argued that some lazy workers recorded work done which was not actually performed, for those actually working, intensity and care could vary greatly without being reflected in reward, and finally, little care would be taken to economise on inputs or use machinery carefully, where quantitative amount of work done was the criterion for distribution and such economising and care was not reflected in income. Similar attacks on the 'egalitarianism' of the work-points system presaged the agrarian reforms in China in which households contracts were introduced after 1979 (Patnaik, 1988).

What is new in the proposed reforms under perestroika' as regards the agrarian sector is the introduction of the idea of medium to long term leases of land to households, which are to be left free to decide what they produce, on the basis of profitability. The taxation system has been modified already to introduce the element of payment of rent on land. Before 1987 the state farms paid a tax out of profits while the

collective farm members paid a tax on incomes. Now however while state farms along with other state-run enterprises continue to pay a tax out of profits, for collective farms the income-tax is decided on the basis of 'norms' stable over a five-year period, which incorporate productivity differences. The collective farms with more fertile lands and higher productivity owing to higher capital-intensity, will pay a higher tax which incorporates therefore the element of differential rent. Increases in productivity however will accrue to the collective farms in the short-medium run since the norms are kept stable for some time. About a quarter of all farms, those with poor lands, would be exempt from farms tax.

Returning to the question of land lease to households, this appears either to have little rationale or to have a rationale which is much less clear than say, the households contract system in China. A situation of labour surplus still prevails in Chinese agriculture (though the magnitude of underemployment is greatly reduced from the 1950 level), there is scope for intensification of methods of manual labour and collective investment had taken the form mainly of irrigation which permits intensive application of labour on small areas. In the Soviet Union by contrast there is a shortage of farm manpower and the level of farm mechanisation is high, entailing a large scale of production. Nevertheless, Gorbachev appears to place a great deal of weight to the potentiality of leases to households as a means of releasing initiative and responsibility, of shaking the workers out of the undoubted inertia of existing methods of functioning, where no individual is responsible for a machine breaking down or for wasteful use of resources. Despite the strenuous efforts being made over the last two years to popularise the idea of household leases, the collective farm workers seem to be less than enthusiastic. It is estimated that on average there are hardly 3 to 4 leases per collective at present though there is a great deal of regional variation. This is in sharp contrast to the enthusiastic adoption of the household contract system on Chinese communes.

A Soviet academic who is on the whole critical of the proposed family contracts remarks that

The difficulties and slow progress of family contracts are explained by several factors. Firstly the existing material and technical base of collective and state farms and the earlier system of farming have not been oriented towards family and small-group forms of labour organisation. In this connection we may recall the modern large farms, the complexes, crop rotations and the system of production services for agriculture. Family and small group forms hardly fit into this production pattern. (Nikiforov, 1988)

He goes on to mention the changes which have taken place in the structure of rural families and in the labour process:

the rural population has sharply dwindled: in many areas active population is nearly nil. Changes have also affected farmers' families of which as such there are very few. And finally, the system of husbandry that has existed for decades is not oriented to contract and family forms of labour organisation either. Specifically, the inter-farm organisation of labour is based on the principle of concentrating the available workforce on 'hot points', moving the workforce and machinery from one area to another depending on immediate burning needs, etc., which is inconsistent with orderly small-group and family contract conditions marked by a high degree of economic independence and free from management by injunctions. (Ibid.,19)

The same author goes on to point out that 'by and large the traditions of the family forms of organisation have been lost,' except in areas like the Central Asian autonomous republics where the large patriarchal family was drawn relatively so much more recently into collectivised production that revival of family contracts today is much faster; the basis of production is moreover still largely manual labour in these areas.

In the light of these very valid observations it is difficult to understand Gorbachev's unqualified enthusiasm for family contracts. Combined with the fact that most of the period of very poor agricultural performance coincided with his tenure of the agricultural development portfolio, it raises doubts regarding the validity of the implicit analysis of decelerating growth, underlying the proposed solutions.

The examples given by the advocates of family leases and contracts, of successful working of this new form, may be mentioned briefly in this context. Gorbachev has often mentioned the 'brothers Kojuhov' from Novosibirsk region, who formed a team of three persons, and raised grain yield from 620 tonnes per worker in 1985 to 880 tonnes the next year and 1042 tonnes in 1987. In Siberia more than 800 similar family-member and small-group teams reportedly cultivated a total of 1 m. hectares of arable land (or 1250 ha. per team) and obtained a productivity per worker about four times the average for the collective and state farms of the region. In the Smolensk region Shaposhnikov and his wife together with his brother's family took on lease 30 ha. of arable from a state farm to cultivate mangel, where they incurred costs of only one-sixth the level on the state farm. Next year the brothers took 60 ha. and shifted to more profitable sugar-beet and also took on lease 500 pigs for fattening, which they did at two-thirds of the cost on State farms. (Lisichkin,1988)

In all these examples however it has to be borne in mind that the 'family farms' are supported by the resources and expertise of the collective or state farms from which land is leased, it is a very far cry from genuinely independent operation with its attendant risks. Lisichkin, giving these examples, asks whether the 'brothers Kojuhov' 'could alone achieve such remarkable results?' and answers in the negative: 'Of course not! They got from the collective farm elite seeds, took on lease machinery; marketing was assured through the channels of wholesale trade, they also received qualified advice of the specialists as to the intensive technological processes. . . . Only in cooperation with the socialised economy a family farm can perform modern agricultural production.' (Lisichkin)

If indeed the 'family farms' are so closely dependent on the collective sector, what is the rationale of household leasing at all, rather than attempting to make the running of the collectives more efficient? Many Soviet economists would answer that both are necessary; the household leasing and contract system enables those who feel that they can operate in this manner, to experiment (they are not debarred from re-entering the collective if they fail), and the positive element is seen as that of the input of careful management. The recent Law On Cooperation in the USSR considerably expands the possibilities of many types of household and small-group enterprise including in agriculture, which had ceased to exist in these forms in the 1930's. At the same time the attitude to the beginnings of these 'cooperatives' is ambivalent. As one academic puts it, 'Socially and ideologically there is . . . mistrust of small-groups forms of organisation. Covert or overt attempts are made to assess these forms as pursuit of profit, heightened individualism and decay of collectivism.' (Nikiforov, 19)

The state and collective farms on the other hand are also undergoing some reforms in functioning, namely in the form of attempted introduction of full cost-accounting, self-financing and reduction in state credits. It is argued that administrative bodies in charge of state and collective farms had little incentive to take careful production decisions to avoid losses because these could always be made up through state credits in the past; the tax-receipts from efficient collectives and state farms in effect subsidised the inefficient ones. With the alteration in the taxation system earlier mentioned, which will exempt the collectives operating under the most unfavourable conditions, altogether from tax, the remainder are now expected to pay more attention to maximising surplus.

Finally, the data given in Table 7 throw some light on the existing land and labour-productivity on different types of farms. Evidently there is a great deal of scope for intensification of production on the state farms in particular, which do not differ markedly from the collective farms in cropping patterns or output structure but have less than half the output value per unit of area. (The personal small hold-

Table 7

	State Farm	Cooperative (Collective) Farm	Personal Small Holdings
1 Output Value (Rb m)	81 00	80 10	58 60
2 Productive Assets Value (Rb bn)	161 20	139 10	31 10
3 Area Cultivated (m ha)	379 30	171 60	8 11
4 Workforce M)	12 0	13 0	2 7
5 Output Value/ha (Rb)	0 21	0 47	7 22
6 Asset Vale/ha (Rb)	424 99	810 61	3834 77
7 Workers/10 ha	3 16	7 58	33 29
8 Outut Value/worker (Rb)	6 75	6 16	21 70
9 Assts Value/worker (Rb)	13 43	10 70	11 52
10 Area/worker, ha	31 61	13 20	3 00

Source Items 1 to 4 from Kuznetsova (1988) 5-10 are derived

ings fall in a different category since their output structure differs markedly with a high proportion of high-valued vegetables and livestock products).

Prospects

In other socialist countries like China and Vietnam which switched to systems of household contracts a decade ago, the price reform was an important adjunct of the new policy and immediately raised the incomes of 70 per cent of the population while stimulating production. The agricultural prices question in the Soviet Union however is a thorny one because over three-quarters of the population would be immediately adversely affected by the raising of agricultural prices (Since there is already a very large subsidy on the basic food items going to non-rural consumers, raising of producers' prices would inevitably imply raising of prices to consumers) For all the talk of price reforms no steps have been taken in this direction so far, largely for this reason.

In the light of the relative lack of enthusiasm displayed so far (for understandable reasons) by collective farmers for the proposed long leases of land (except in C Asia), and the difficulties attendant on price reforms, it would be fair to say that no coherent and credible strategy has as yet emerged in the Soviet Union for tackling the undoubtedly serious problems of lagging agricultural productivity. The danger is that a series of *ad hoc* measures may now be undertaken under the pressures of implementing an abstract idea of perestroika, which are unlikely to make a decisive impact on the problem.

62 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

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Historicizing the Problems of Socialism

Practically all socialist countries so far known have been born out of societies which had made only a very imperfect transition to capitalism. The latter is defined, following Karl Marx, as a mode of production under which labour power has been converted into a commodity which is 'freely' sold and bought, and where the means of production are concentrated in the hands of a class which derives its surplus by using the freely sold labour power in production processes under their control. In Tsarist Russia or Guomindang China, labour was anything but free in this sense except in relatively small pockets and regions, and the major means of production and asset was land whose owners exercised various forms of non-market power over peasants and landless workers.

The cultural ambience of these countries before the communist revolution was loaded with various kinds of feudal and patriarchal values. The long struggle waged by the artists and intellectuals of Tsarist Russia and Imperial or Guomundang China against such values and exploitative patterns of living certainly helped form the seedbed for the germination of a new culture. But it is very likely that even after the overthrow of the Tsarist and Guomindang regimes, the social values of large sections of the common people remained tinged with feudal, patriarchal, religious and even monarchical overtones.

One reason for such obstinate survival of the older values was that they had had long centuries in which to prepare their dreadful offering and to adapt the unwritten, informal codes of communication embedded in the family, the clan or the neighbourhood to their own requirements. The second reason was that the rationalist or socialist consciousness that should have dissolved the darkness of unreason did not always grow out of a direct critique of the specific forms such unreason took in the context of those societies, but out of a more general, more abstract and hence often less compelling analysis of the requirements of a scientific attitude towards the world. One of the best examples of the tenacity of unreason is that of the adherents of the Sankhya school of Indian philosophy. They had no difficulty in recon-

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ciling their general denial of the existence of God with a meticulous observance of some of the most obscurantist and humiliating rituals of Hinduism. (Rabindranath Tagore's novel, *Chaturanga*, takes such a philosopher as one of the key characters in the story)

When the communists took over, of course, they smashed landlordism and private property in means of production in these countries, and made a stupendous effort to spread universal education, and inculcate a scientific attitude to both natural and human affairs among the people. But if I am not mistaken, they did not undertake to rebuild all aspects of a culture or make a locally rooted critique of the social practices, including those which had religious superstition and patriarchal hierarchy encoded in them along with centuries-old folk memories and centuries-old strategies of survival and preservation of dignity of the oppressed people. They assumed that such superstition would vanish as a new mode of production—the socialist mode—was born in the factories and firms. But in fact, as the building of socialism itself involved many hardships, the socialist man and woman clung to many older myths of survival and the pattern of living and solidarity harboured many remnants of feudal and patriarchal hierarchy. Communist leadership was often indistinguishable in their eyes from state-imposed bureaucracy. Such survivals and rebirths have been obstinate enough and obdurate enough for the new leadership in China and Russia to call for the rooting out of feudal values and smashing of bureaucratic rigidity masquerading as socialist solidarity and the discipline of socialist planning.

While talking about the obdurate survival of old social and cultural values, we must also bear in mind the fact that the socialist societies are surrounded on all sides by capitalist and semi-feudal regimes. Therefore, if a large section of the Polish workers and peasants cling to the Roman Catholic faith as a sheet-anchor of their national consciousness as distinct from the national consciousness and the hegemonising tendencies of, to their eyes, an overbearing Russian presence, those dissident elements are picked up by the huge propaganda apparatus of a reactionary Pope and are offered the carrot of the financial support of the affluent capitalist powers. The westward inclinations of dissident citizens of an Eastern European country are powerfully reinforced by the presence of an ever-beckoning United States of America. If a socialist citizen remains a nationalist in his highest level of solidarity with his fellow human beings, there is grave danger of his sliding into the consciousness of a revanchist, imperialist man in his identification with a Roman Catholic, Orthodox or even Protestant past, especially since a 'free' capitalist West remains a land of opportunity for eastern European migrants in the memory of many grandfathers and grandmothers of today's citizens. A truly internationalist citizen of a socialist country has somehow to identify himself (herself) globally with the oppressed two-thirds of mankind, with the blacks of Africa, the marginalized

mestizos and mulattos of Latin America, the still-benighted, illiterate, vermin-ridden millions of Asia, and not just with those fortunate citizens of the civilized Atlantic seaboard and advanced rim of the Pacific who are smarter-looking and more affluent than an average inhabitant of the socialist world. Socialist consciousness has to become ultimately the consciousness of a true citizen of the world.

For either meeting the challenge of the myths of freedom and prosperity of existing capitalist societies or the revolutionizing of consciousness of socialist man so as to root out the anti-egalitarian and anti-libertarian survivals from feudalism, barbarism and aggrandizing nationalism, it is not enough to deny the relevance of those elements of the feudal, barbaric, mercenary culture patterns which are obviously inimical to ideals of equality, fraternity and liberty. It is necessary also to consciously appropriate the elements of the past culture which still have the power to give men and women a richer life. Such efforts have not been lacking. It was after all a socialist critic (Jan Kott), who had the insight to call Shakespeare 'Our Contemporary'. The contemporaneity of all great art should be not a matter of stylized iconography, but a subject of ever-rejuvenating tradition. I am sure that Soviet scholars and artists have pondered many of those questions deeply and long. But it should be a part of an active discussion elsewhere also why the creativity of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Kozintsev, Wajda or Tarkovsky in films has not been matched in literary works of equal power from the socialist world. Was it really necessary to deny the possibility of conflicts within a socialist society? And was the blandness or even insipidness of the harvest of socialist literature a necessary result of that? I am sure that there are other students of socialism who are better able to answer these questions. But I would put forward even my ignorance as evidence of an insufficient airing of these problems in the existing literature.

The current Soviet leadership, especially General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, is fully aware of the need to open up discussion on all aspects of existence of socialist man, and they regard democratization both as an end in itself (which it must be, above everything else) and as a means.¹ Where does the power of democratization as a means come in either in the Soviet Union or in today's China?

The answer must partly lie again in the history of the Soviet revolution and the socialist reconstruction. What the Soviet Union was attempting was to try and catch up with the Second Industrial Revolution of the West. This meant heavy engineering, large integrated iron and steel plants, massive electricity generating stations, and above all, large hierarchically organized industrial organizations run on Taylorist principles. This made eminent sense as a strategy of desperate defence against the imperialist and Nazi aggression. But as revolutionary enthusiasm waned, as planning became another name for directions from the top, the team spirit of the

socialist worker could no longer find any objective criteria by which to overcome the rigidity of a bureaucracy that met neither the challenge of the market nor the challenge of democracy at the plant level. When the Chinese leadership in the late 1950s wanted to get away from the gigantism of the Soviet plans, they could not really find an alternative but tended to lurch from one massive mobilization effort to another. This explains to some extent the desire of such economists and leaders as Chen Yun to restore the discipline of central planning.

However, the discipline of central planning, which has many analogies in the running of large private firms², while necessary for ensuring growth with egalitarianism, is by no means sufficient for it. It has to be combined with flexibility in at least three directions. First, it has to meet the challenge of absorbing unpredictable changes in consumer preferences and in technology as the society moves from being poor and agrarian to becoming affluent and industrial. How does the society go on shifting the risks of such changes from private to public shoulders without at the same time either destroying incentives for introducing the changes or converting the would-be innovators into either time-serving bureaucrats or irresponsible hams? What are the signaling devices to be used if private desires cannot find an expression in the market place except in a muted and delayed manner? (The muting and delaying are surely to be part of socialist culture if it is not to be made a mockery or end in a flurry of smuggling and black markets). Can votes and notional market surveys replace the greedy shoppers in supermarkets? (The Lange-Lerner pricing scheme, beloved of economists, can even work theoretically when all the consumer preferences and all the technologies are given, and there are no surprises, pleasant or unpleasant.)

Secondly, the centrally planned socialist economy needs to break down the gigantism of the second Industrial Revolution if it is to fully meet the challenge of the third Industrial Revolution, which despite the havoc wrought by the global capitalist recession (and surely partly powered by that recession itself) is changing production processes and organizations all over the world. One of the most insidious ways in which it is affecting the industrial prosperity of the Soviet Union and China is by offering technologies which use much less raw materials and energy than the older vintages. This means that many capitalist economies can now offer goods which are much less expensive in real terms (even if we ignore the man-hours of labour where also socialist bloc technologies are often more prodigal) than comparable commodities offered by the Soviet Union. Of course, China can still offer many labour-intensive goods more cheaply than her more affluent East Asian neighbours. I am here talking about goods that are technologically more sophisticated. The socialist bloc does not really have the alternative of withdrawing into itself and spurning all offers, for it is necessarily involved in the international network of flows of essential consumer goods, luxuries, production equipment and

armaments. This is an aspect about which both Mikhail Gorbachev and Deng Xiao-Ping have spoken candidly³, the systemic problems of socialist economies driven into endemic shortage have also been explored by such economists as W. Brus and J. Kornai⁴ and so I will not elaborate this point here.

The third challenge before the socialist world is to move from being mainly an adapter and absorber in the area of civilian technology to becoming an innovator in those areas. Both the Soviet Union and China have very successfully travelled what I have called the 'mobilization' and the 'associationist' routes to the absorption of technology⁵, both have used their own technological powers to build defence systems against the menace of capitalist imperialism. But barring a few outstanding cases, they have not been on the frontline of innovation in civilian technology, and it is partly their urge to absorb the new vintages of civilian technology from the affluent capitalist countries that has led countries such as Poland and Romania into the jaws of international indebtedness. How does one set about building an intimate association between scientists, technologists and workers and managers of production plants without sacrificing democracy and egalitarianism, so as to generate new ideas that can be productively implemented?

As a fellow-economist ruefully admitted some years back, there is as yet no perfect socialism on earth.⁶ But along with him, I would also plead that we have to go on striving for a better system along the socialist path. For, plainly, we cannot afford the endless waste of capitalism, and the ever-present threat of having the earth blown up in a nuclear holocaust. In order to strive for socialism, we will need staunch commitment. But at the same time, we must be able to look critically at the existing systems of 'transitional socialism'. The leaders of the socialist countries have been certainly doing so. Those living outside those countries must also get away from the shibboleths of our professions. One of those is plans vs. markets. Just as there is no watertight line of demarcation between centralization and decentralization in planning, as Maurice Dobb taught⁷, there is no clear demarcation line between markets and state intervention.⁸ One reason for this is that markets and market operators themselves vary with the climes and the times. Is the apparently greater success of China after 1978 in using prices and private incentives for the restructuring of agriculture and retail distribution due to the fact that China had a more successful, more internationalized local business community than Russia had before the communist revolution?⁹ Or is it because the Chinese communists continued consciously to use the overseas Chinese as a way of beating the US blockade during the 1950s and 1960s, whereas the Soviet Union closed its doors to all capitalists from the 1930s onwards? Is the Chinese 'success' a success along the path to socialism or is it a portent of a slide-back to capitalism? I myself do not believe that the Chinese are treading a primrose or a slimy path to

capitalism, but this is an issue that needs to be debated not only in the abstract but as a concrete case, after taking full account of all the historic constraints, opportunities and temptations. The same caveat also applies to the discussion of socialism anywhere on earth.

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- 2 For a discussion of the similarities and differences, see A K Bagchi, *Public Intervention and Industrial Restructuring in China, India and Republic of Korea*, ILO-ARTEP, New Delhi, 1987, chapter 2, and M Dietrich, 'Organisational Requirements of a Socialist Economy Theoretical and Practical Suggestions', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 10(4), December 1986
- 3 In the flurry of justified and not so justified criticisms of the Cultural Revolution in China, we must not forget that Mao Zedong himself was one of the most profound critics of traditional socialism
- 4 W Brus, *The Market in a Socialist Economy*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972, J Kornai, *The Economics of Shortage* (in 2 volumes), North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1980
- 5 A K Bagchi, 'Technological Self-Reliance and Underdevelopment,' Occasional paper No 97, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, October 1987, Calcutta, section 4 The Chinese methods of transfer and absorption of technology have been briefly discussed in Bagchi, *Public Intervention and Industrial Restructuring*, sections 4,5
- 6 D M Nuti, 'Socialism on Earth', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 5(4), December 1981
- 7 Ibid, p 398
- 8 Cf C P Chandrasekhar, 'State Intervention and Industrial Change Towards a Synthesis', *Social Scientist*, 16(5), May 1988
- 9 It would appear that big capitalists in Russia either belonged to minority group—such as the Jews or the 'Old Believers'—or were foreigners, the capitalists in China belonged to the majority Han community Could this have something to do with the greater aversion to 'capitalist' methods displayed by the Russian leadership compared with their Chinese comrades?

NOTE

Comments on the Question of 'Historicizing the Problems of Socialism'

It is with a degree of trepidation that one has accepted the role of discussant for this paper by Professor Bagchi, which by providing as it were a whiff of the thinking behind it, leaves one asking for more. Trepidation not merely because of the canvas he captures in his tersely written paper, but also because 'perestroika' as a movement raises issues which anyone even indirectly involved with the worldwide quest that the socialist ideal involves should have raised at every point of his education in pursuit of that ideal. This note has no intention of coming to terms with all of those evaded questions, but rather to presumptuously think aloud about that subset of issues focussed upon by Professor Bagchi.

One must begin by venturing to summarise his concerns. To start with, one needs to understand why those questions were evaded even within the socialist theoretical legacy—was it, as Prof. Bagchi suggests, because of the obdurate survivals of old social and cultural values, which allowed bureaucratic rigidity to masquerade as socialist solidarity and the discipline of socialist planning? The full implication of this assessment needs to be stated. It is not merely that the many hardships that the building of socialism involved resulted in the fact that the socialist man and woman clung to older values that foreclosed critical appraisal of a system which in a sense was ahead of its times in the countries where it emerged. But also that in a world where capitalism coexists with socialism, 'if a socialist citizen remains a nationalist in his highest level of solidarity with his fellow human beings, there is a grave danger of his sliding into the consciousness of a revanchist, imperialist man in his identification with a Roman Catholic, Orthodox or even Protestant past, especially since a 'free' capitalist West remains a land of opportunity for eastern European migrants in the memory of many grandfathers and grandmothers of today's citizens.' Thus the attitude to socialism itself would not merely be coloured by 'feudal' and patriarchal hangovers, but by its ability to offer and correspond to that 'land of opportunity' as it were. In a queer reversal of the theoretical roots of the socialist legacy, the failure rather than the success of socialism is its inability to ensure much of what a capitalist system does.

Thus while the democratisation that 'glasnost' involves is an inevitable and welcome first step towards the generation of an internal and forward looking critique of the achievements and failures of existing socialist societies, it also carries with it the danger of the reversal of the gains from that tradition itself. Thus any complete assessment of the current reforms in the socialist countries must include both an assessment of the correctness of the questions being asked as well as the nature of the 'experiments' being conducted as answers to these questions. This is all the more crucial because though it is unclear where the line of demarcation between centralised and decentralised planning or between state intervention and markets needs to be drawn, there is a point in the continuum between the former and the latter where 'market autonomism' takes over, leading to macro-economic fluctuations and crises of a kind more typical of capitalism, even within systems where private property is not dominant. The fact that the line of demarcation is unclear is itself a reflection of the fact that the point where that demarcation is made is the exercise of a choice that takes into consideration the sacrifice of macro-economic coordination that a shift to greater decentralisation (with the concomitant reliance on market mechanisms and price signals) involves, and the benefit in terms of the much needed flexibility in micro-economic decision making during the phase of intensive reproduction, when the system cannot ignore the waste of resources that are no more in excess supply. The choice has to be made depending on circumstances, but the danger is that tendencies to imitate the land of opportunity may introduce external effects that bias that decision.

There are two questions that arise in this context. Firstly, is flexibility at the micro-economic level adequate to ensure that waste, in terms of resource use for any given output or lack of correspondence between demands on the market and actual supplies, disappears? An affirmative answer assumes that the motivation to achieve such results exist. If they do not, that motivation must be stimulated by rewards and penalties, profits and better returns and the threat of closure and unemployment. That is, the market is no more a benign force that permits greater flexibility, but begins to influence the nature of the system. Secondly, when dealing with inefficiency of the kind spoken above or with the equally important problem of an inadequate rate of innovation, is inadequate flexibility the real issue?

Prof. Bagchi gives three reasons why flexibility is crucial. First, the need to meet the challenge of unpredictable changes in consumer preferences and technology that the transition from relative poverty to affluence provides. Second, the need for innovation in the area of civilian technology. And third the need to break down the gigantism of the second Industrial Revolution in order to meet the challenge of the third Industrial Revolution which has involved a change in the nature of production processes and organisations all over the world.

The first is no doubt true, so long as flexibility is alone the issue involved. However, if the latter two arguments prevail, then there is a technologically determined inevitability about the movement to a high level of decentralisation of economic decision-making, even if this brings in its train the anarchy and cyclical fluctuations more characteristic of capitalism. Does the development of technology in recent years necessarily suggest such an inevitability? No doubt, implicit in such an argument is the assumption that there exists only one route to innovation in the area of civilian technology, exemplified by firms like Apple and Microsoft in the USA. Needless to say, even if we take examples from the successful innovators, the picture is more complex. Not only is there a considerable degree of divergence in the relationship between firm size and innovation as we move across industries—say from personal computers to mainframes to telecommunications—but also within the same industry, there exist divergences in the firm size-innovation relationship as we move across countries—from the US to Japan for example.

The case for the move away from the gigantism of the second Industrial Revolution is of course more complex, since it involves an element of futurological speculation. At present, however, there are two aspects of the evolving experience. First, there exists a considerable lag in time and nature between miniaturisation at the product level and that in processes. Second, product and process miniaturisation has not always been accompanied by a similar trend in organisations, which have often grown even more gigantic in terms of turnover and world market shares. And finally, the race for innovation linked to the third Industrial Revolution between firms and nations has resulted in a high degree of coordination between firms and governments within and across nations (as for example, in Europe).

Finally, if organisational size is not necessarily technologically determined, neither is the extent of democratisation. Glasnost and the democratisation at the political level that it involves is not necessarily a means to the destruction of the gigantism that underlies bureaucratisation but a means of preserving democracy despite the existence of 'large hierarchically organised industrial organisations'.

Thus, while the move towards decentralization implicit in perestroika is no doubt to be welcomed as a necessary response to the growing complexity of the economy in the socialist world which can no more tolerate the waste associated with the inflexibility of centralised systems, the judgement of whether the extent of decentralisation and the move towards the market has been excessive can yet be judged only in terms that were implicit in the classic defence of socialism as a system that permits overcoming the waste and anarchy characteristic of capitalism.

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BOOK REVIEW

Interpreting the Gorbachev Phenomenon

The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation. By Moshe Lewin. University of California Press. pp 176 \$ 16.95

It is unusual, but there it is. Moshe Lewin, author of *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates* and *The Making of the Soviet System*, who ceased to be a Soviet citizen at least three decades ago, continues to tuck inside himself a patriotic pride. Historical time, he will perhaps not disagree, can be looked at from different perspectives. He does not however believe in turning history upside down; he would not, for instance, go along with the developing trend to appraise the role of Josef Stalin in terms of what naive western capitalist circles would describe as Stalinist historiography. The Soviet history of the past seventy years Lewin views as an inter-related—and internally consistent—flow; you cannot pick and choose the bits you like, and condemn the rest as junk. An organic link exists between events and episodes which took place at different points of time during these seven decades. It will be sheer illiteracy to heap the blame for some of the unsavoury developments in the Soviet Union in the thirties and subsequently on the whims and fancies of a supposedly all-powerful leader, who just happened to be around. The reality is more complex. Nor is it convincing to attempt to isolate, *ex post*, the concavity of the magnificent strides the nation made in several spheres from the influence of such negative historical features. You have to take the rough along with the smooth; the two, after all, are logically bound together.

The Soviet system, Lewin would not deny, is currently encountering a crisis. But it is not a crisis of the polity alone, nor is it specific to the economic apparatus, it affects the whole social structure. True, things have been going awry. True, there is an overlay of bureaucracy, which can be claustrophobic. True, the regime of detailed controls is turning out to be self-destructive. Signals beamed from the top of the party hierarchy, as well as across from the State sector, have ceased to carry the weight they did in the past, adding to the political and economic confusion. In many regions and sectors, the party apparatus and the

people have grown apart; in a single-party arrangement, this can have catastrophic consequences. These are the challenges Comrade Gorbachev and his colleagues are facing. They are going about it in a manner which has particularly dazzled the capitalist world. But it will be foolish to get carried away. Gorbachev's role is not to undo an historical wrong, rather, it is to respond to a situation which has ripened in response to historical circumstances. The current convulsions in the Soviet Union, in other words, are the outcome of the dialectical process itself.

Lewin's main contention has an unadorned elegance. The Bolshevik revolution seven decades ago, once successful, set for its heroes an awesome task. Apart from blotches of urban concentration here and there, the country was under-developed and overwhelmingly agricultural, the population, in its outlook and attitude, was near-primitive. The handful of capitalists that were there escaped abroad; foreign capital dried up for obvious reasons; the erstwhile trade and mercantile arrangements collapsed. The NEP was a stop gap. The economy needed to be hurriedly assembled together in some sort of working shape so as to forestall the counter-revolution. But it had then to be constructed anew, building block by building block. It was not a problem of run-of-the-mill masonry, but of total re-structuring. What implements and tools would they choose to effect this vast transformation? The Bolshevik leadership, Lewin hypothesises, could not hope to learn much from Marxist texts, especially where economics was concerned. Apart from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, there was really little to go by. They fell back on their wits. They opted for the system they, and the Russian people, were most familiar with. The czar was shot, and the rural potentates were liquidated. But the model to follow was the only one the people, including the functionaries of the party, had available immediately for themselves. It was a feudal-autocratic model. Orders were given at the top and lower echelons were expected only to carry them out. Because it was authoritarian and absolutist, and because the prevailing ethos was of the Middle Ages, in the beginning the model yielded significant results. However, soon flaws developed. The lower echelons learnt to emulate the habits and reflexes of those above them; the autocratic model of behavior percolated all the way down, and a deadly hierarchical system emerged. The Soviet leaders adopted the agrarian-authoritarian model lock, stock and barrel; the cultural milieu then obtaining made this the most natural of arrangements in the twenties and thirties. The trappings of absolute authority ensured ready compliance, as they do during the halcyon days of any reigning autocracy. But the defects of absolutism also became the features of the Soviet system. The party potentates, Lewin suggests, ceased, after an interval of time, to be unerring judges of overall national priorities. Lower-level bureaucrats abused their offices, fouled up communications and indulged in large-scale corruption. In emergencies, the system still

succeeded to come up with rough and ready solutions which worked. But costs mounted, and sloth set in, primitivism and waste tended to go together. The major commands got transmitted and obeyed, which is why the Soviet authorities were able to implement, even if not always altogether comfortably, the principal aspects of the Feldman schemata of economic expansion, historically the single most important factor explaining the breakneck speed of Soviet economic growth. Detailed, specific commands, on the other hand, were often messed up. The failure of Soviet agriculture is therefore not difficult to explain: for ensuring a breakthrough in farm production and productivity in a command economy, there is need for both detailed planning and transmittal and acceptance of detailed signals, this was beyond the capability of the crude communications apparatus the autocratic arrangements were heir to. Errors at the micro level multiplied, while, perhaps because of the inertia of large numbers, the macro calculations still came out right. But the mechanism has been increasingly malfunctioning in the past couple of decades. Discontent has spread in the farm sector in the wake of the failure to meet plan targets. Given the inter-dependence of sectors, what happened in agriculture soon affected the rest of the economy, including external accounts. This, then, according to Lewin is a particular irony of history: the Soviet party leadership had put their trust on a *peasant* model, but in course of time the model let them down the most in the working of the agrarian sector.

Any snide comments, Lewin would however argue, are uncalled for. For it is still the achievements in the post-revolutionary period which have opened the floodgate of contradictions within the system. Precisely because the primitive-autocratic model succeeded in bringing about a qualitative transformation, there is now widespread perception of its limitations. Soviet society has come a long way since 1917, it has come a long way on account of what the people, under the guidance and inspiration of the communist party, have been able to attain over the decades. The advances are not just in the sphere of defence and economics, the Soviet people can rejoice not merely at the fact that they are today the second largest industrial nation in the world or that their technological success in several important spheres have outstripped the achievements of nearly every other country. The transformation is equally, if not more, remarkable in the areas of culture and education. The nation has, with unbelievable speed, stepped out of the Middle Ages. The shift of population away from the villages and the scale of industrialization have accelerated the process of urbanization, industrial and scientific-technical development, mass schooling and quality schooling, communications and arts, state policies and myriad spontaneous events changed the nation's overall social, professional, and cultural profile, and the social structure underwent a significant qualitative transformation. Workers in the national economy soared from 24 million before war to

almost 81 million in 1983; of these, the number engaged in industry jumped from 11 million to over 31 million .. The role of the working class in the economy is underscored by the fact that it is now the prevailing group in society and in the cities: 61.5 per cent of the population, almost twice the share in 1939. In comparison, the *kolkhoz* peasants, once over half of the population, are now barely 12.5 per cent of the nation ... in 1941 only about 2.4 million of the 11 million employees had higher or specialized technical education in 1960 only half of the 16 million employees were 'specialists', today, an overwhelming majority accede to this category. Recent figures show over 31.5 million specialists, among them 13.5 million with higher education and over 18 million with specialized secondary training' (pp 46-47) Lewin draws equal attention to the fantastic strides women have made in the Soviet Union

It is therefore no longer a primitive society; it is now urbanised and incomparably sophisticated; its response system is also transformed. That the primitive model fails to click any more is therefore hardly surprising. The relationship between the state and the people has to undergo a fundamental reorientation in the changed circumstances

... one-dimensioned ideas about the Soviet system and its past, present and future must be discarded. If the State is not the sole controller that it was thought to be, or hoped to be, if spontaneous historical trends and spontaneous public actions and reactions play a role in the making of the system; and if the USSR has developed a complex social body and a social system, with classes and publics, cultures and counter cultures-then the political subsystem of such a complex aggregate must be understood to have a history of relating and responding to social and economic development. Moreover, the political subsystem has to be seen, especially in our times, as somewhat pliant, capable of changing its role in relation to the overall environment. It can and does press and make demands, but the institutions of the state do not unilaterally dictate the national agenda. More than ever before, the political organs are responding to the powerful contradictory pressures of domestic social reality as well as to the stresses and demands of international events' (pp.81-2)

Lewin's approach admittedly differs from the simplistic position taken by the majority of Western scholars and commentators apropos of the phenomenon of perestroika. He does not look at history as the end-product of the whims and fancies of an egomaniac or dictator, nor are the deficiencies manifesting themselves at different points of the economy he uniquely attributes to a developing chasm between the mass of the people and a supposedly self-centered, conspiratorial, authoritarian party apparatchik. Rather, what is currently unfolding in the Soviet Union, and, through sympathetic impulses, in several

other socialist countries in eastern Europe, Lewin maintains, is the agony and ecstasy of an increasingly urbane system trying to come to terms, simultaneously, with both heredity and environment. The system is discovering that it is outgrowing itself; that does not mean that it is the helpless, inert victim of the law of change; on the contrary, it is the living proof of the validity of the law of change; it can legitimately take pride in the fact that its once-primitive paraphernalia succeeded in triggering off a process of transformation which has enabled the Soviet people to arrive at the advanced mileposts they have reached today. It is, however, in the nature of the law of change that the paraphernalia itself must now be re-tooled and re-fashioned.

Lewin no doubt is partly right in some matters. In some others, he is however hopelessly wrong. There are two disturbing features in his analysis. First, it is devoid of a political content. Soviet history, he almost suggests, can be packaged in bland sociological descriptions, such that Soviet society has outgrown the *muzhik* phase and the *muzhik* modalities of behavior which ensured the success of the command system in the past; the nation is now transformed, and in search of sophisticated answers to the freshly emerging problems; such answers can only be provided by processes which too have to be progressively more sophisticated and complex; these processes, to be successful, will call for patient experimentation over the long haul.

Secondly, Lewin, whether purposely or otherwise, rules out the role of ideology in what has happened in the Soviet Union during the past seventy years, or is happening now. His is a 'nationalist' model, almost a 'patriotic' model. It is as if the party and the ideology had nothing to do with Soviet accomplishments, good or bad: it was all the doings and misdoings of the Russian agrarian tradition.

On both counts, Lewin deserves to be contradicted. The 'social'—very nearly 'anthropological'—explanation he proffers of Soviet developments is not devoid of historicity, but it is segmented, compartmental historicity. It can also, at least by implication, be subjected to a racist interpretation. Some motivated individuals could easily claim that what Lewin hints at is that, for an excruciatingly long period spanning over seven decades, the Soviet people were held in thralldom by their primitive, Asiatic roots, all that is however done with, lo and behold, they are now entering the sophisticated European epoch, where everything will turn up roses. This kind of vulgarisation of history will not be much different from the absurdity of the point of view that Josef Stalin, that boorish Asiatic, son of a serf, had pushed Russia along wrong rails, now good, sensible men such as the Gorbachevs and the Dobrynins are repairing the damage done to the nation's European heritage, and, given the goodwill of the capitalist world, by golly, they are going to succeed.

Moreover, is it not both outrageous and ludicrous to keep silent on the ideological process that has been sometimes quietly, sometimes

stridently, at work in the Soviet Union during these seven decades? The Soviet people are what they are today because of the inspiration provided by Marxism and the stewardship of the communist party. The latter were hardly adjuncts of a primitive social morality, occasionally doing its biddings, and occasionally cutting athwart its biddings. Without the foundation of ideology, there would have been no Soviet system. Marxist ideology lays heavy stress on the law of social dynamics, what is currently taking place in the Soviet system is not the negation of this ideology, but its vindication. That does not mean that confusion and doubts do not persist. An ideology is moribund if it does not give rise to a phase of self-questioning every now and then, such self-questioning actually demarcates a live ideology from a dead dogma.

Other questions too arise. Lewin moves within self-imposed contours. At the core of the perestroika experiment is the felt need for a radical reform of the Soviet economic management system. In Comrade Gorbachev's words,

'Socialism and public ownership ... hold out virtually unlimited possibilities for progressive economic process. For this, however, we must each time find the most effective forms of socialist ownership and of the organization of the economy. Of prime importance in this respect is for the people to be the true master of production rather than a master only in name. For without it, individual workers or collectives are not interested, nor can they be interested, in the final results of their work.' (Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking For Our Country and the World*, Collins, p. 83).

This is not a managerial or technological question alone, to be isolated from the tearing processes at work on the ideological plane. It is really that old, eternal issue of form and content socialist thought had continuously grappled with. If Lewin wants to relegate this ideological issue into an aspect of transitional difficulties a people travelling through anthropological time have to face from time to time, his analysis is both false and irrelevant.

There is reason to express oneself strongly on this point. The pitfalls of dealing with the problem of economic management on the basis of a non-ideological approach hardly need elaboration. Interested quarters have really gone to town to exploit the current ideological ferment in the Soviet Union for their narrow, opportunistic purposes. Many have got into the act, including quacks of all descriptions. They have great ambitions. They hope both to sabotage, in country after country, the global structure of national planning and to supplant the law of socialist valuation by adopting the so-called 'free market' principles rooted to individual profit motive. These propagandists actually have ideology very much at the back of their mind, they want to launch

their onslaught against the very foundations of a socialist system, no less. Must we however forget either history—or, for that matter, the realities of contemporary living? Socialist planning emerged because of the proved imperfections of the capitalist market structure and the inhumanity grafted in it. It is the hallmark of socialist ideology that, unlike the economic philosophy held in adulation by expropriation-minded capitalists, it is not afraid to take up the challenge of experimentation. But there can be no question of throwing out the baby along with the bath water. It is not even half-a-century since Oskar Lange and his associates demonstrated that the tenets of what neo-classical ideologues have described as welfare economics—which is the most idealized form of free and perfect competition—are realizable only under a socialist sky. Because of exigencies of circumstances in the Soviet Union, such as frictional problems affecting the deployment of men and resources, it may be necessary to relax the postulates of socialist planning temporarily, in isolated cases, and for experimental purposes. It would however be lunacy to relax the overall control of State authority and the dominance of the will of the people which this authority reflects. Again, there could be debate over the most appropriate format for maintaining continuous two-way communication between people and state agencies, or between people and a party burdened by the complexities of a throbbing, developing system. The format nonetheless has to belong to the corpus of socialist ideology. Since Lewin drains his analysis of all ideological content and reduces the Soviet problem into a problematic of national transition, while one may admire his left-over patriotic instincts, one has to reject his conclusions.

And because he has chosen a narrow patriotic groove for himself, Lewin also lapses into that other error so common these days, he ignores the international context of the socialist system. What concerns the Soviet Union and its people does not leave unaffected the international brotherhood of struggling, working peoples across the world. Thus perestroika, and the manner it is implemented, have major global implications. The essential issue is not just what pressures could be lifted from the Soviet economy should there be a detente leading to extensive disarmament, or what new relationships could be established, within the framework of the Soviet apparatus, to mirror more faithfully than has been possible in the past both the aspirations of the people and the compulsions of targets set, at various levels, by the State agencies. It is the ideology of class war which gave birth to the Soviet Union. Perestroika does not imply the suspension of that ideology, nor does it negate the reality of that war. Perestroika is only a facet of a short-term tactic. The tactic must however serve the cause of ideology. Those who, like Lewin, miss the point only mislead themselves, it is unlikely that they will mislead true socialists.

ASHOK MITRA

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1 A Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977

2 See R Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', *Journal of Comparative Economics*, December 1979, pp 325-45

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Editorial

Number 184 of *Social Scientist* was the first number of the double issue on the history of peasants in struggle. The present number carries papers by Partha Chatterjee, D.N. Dhanagare and K Suresh Singh. The first two authors deal with the theoretical analysis of peasant movements and peasant consciousness, both focussing on the 'subaltern studies' approach though from differing perspectives. The last author discusses the movement of the Tana Bhagats of Chotanagpur.

This journal has in the past carried discussions of the 'subaltern studies' volumes as they appeared. Partha Chatterjee in his paper argues for an 'Indian history of peasant struggle' as opposed to a history of peasant struggles in India. Adopting the framework suggested by Guha (1983), which takes as its analytical focus the 'principle of community as the characteristic unifying feature of peasant consciousness', Chatterjee argues that both the colonialists and the organised political movements of nationalism—whether the Congress or the Left parties—have shared a common premise in regarding peasants as 'objects of history' to be manipulated for certain ends, and have never viewed 'the peasant' as 'an active and conscious subject of history'. While the existence of differentiation within the peasantry is conceded, the stress is on the 'differentiated unity' representing the 'principle of community' which is recognised as the central concept of the theory.

D.N. Dhanagare considers the subaltern studies approach to constitute an important and useful intervention, but is critical regarding its methodological premises. He points out that as regards the emphasis, which is undoubtedly welcome and very necessary, on developing a 'history from below' by utilising the rich storehouse of oral traditions and social customs of the people, this has been a well-established trend in European Marxist historiography; to which he might have added the name of D.D. Kosambi in the case of India.

Dhanagare questions the validity of the notion of 'autonomy of consciousness' of peasants and also the concept of 'subalternity' itself, which is so vaguely defined as to include on occasions not only the rural poor but also rich peasants and landlords. He points out that a number of contributions to the subaltern studies volumes represent a straightforward analysis of the struggles of rural labour and poor peasants, which do not fit into the proposed conceptual framework.

It seems to us that there is indeed a basic conceptual problem with the acceptance of 'peasant community' as a central analytical category, in historical situations where not only is there varying degrees of class differentiation within rural populations across regions at a point of time (from small little differentiated tribal communities to highly stratified cultivating societies) but also differing scenarios with respect to the speed and character of differentiation, over time (as under the differential impact of commodity production in the colonial period). Peasant struggles have arisen for quite different reasons and involving quite different combinations of social classes. To postulate a 'paradigmatic form' encompassing 'invariant elements' of a supposed 'peasant consciousness' then appears ahistorical and recalls the views of the Narodnik and neo-populist intellectuals of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Russia, who also stressed 'the principle of community' to the exclusion of any analysis of varying levels of contradictions. Revolutionary leaders, however, such as Mao Zedong—who came from a middle peasant background—appear to have had no problems in integrating peasant struggles with the organised political movement drawing its ideology from proletarian—not peasant—consciousness.

K. Suresh Singh documents the progressive unfolding of the Tana Bhagat movement among the Oraon in Chotanagpur from 1915, from the millenarian phase to the growth of agrarian demands and finally the linking up with the wider national movement, within a few years. To what extent the aspirations of the Bhagats was satisfied however remains an open question.

UTSA PATNAIK

PARTHA CHATTERJEE*

For An Indian History of Peasant Struggle

In this paper, I will make a plea for a historiographical project which has only begun to be formulated. I will not, therefore, present before you another sociological model of peasant revolt, neatly wrapped up and ready to be applied to whichever pre-capitalist period or backward agrarian country you happen to work on. The project I will describe is an Indian project, whose specific problems and analytical contours have begun to emerge out of the experiences, both practical and theoretical (i.e., both historical and historiographical), of peasant struggles in that predominantly agrarian society. It is, as I will argue, a central element of that larger project of constructing the framework for an Indian historiography rescued from the prisonhouse of colonialist knowledge, a task which too has by no means been completed.

Let me anticipate an obvious objection by stating quite clearly that what I will argue for is an Indian history of peasant struggle, not a history of peasant struggles in India. The semantic difference signifies a quite radical difference in the approach to historiography. The latter stands for an arrangement of the historical material on peasant struggles in India according to a framework in which the fundamental concepts and analytical relations are taken as given, established in their generality by the forms of a universal history (e.g., the theory of transition from feudalism to capitalism, or modernisation theory, or the theory of world systems, or the theory of the moral economy of the peasant, and so on). The former seeks to discover in that material the forms of an immanent historical development, fractured, distorted and forced into the grid of 'world history' only by the violence of colonialism. The framework of this other history does not take as given its appointed place within the order of a universal history, but rather submits the supposedly universal categories to a constant process of interrogation and contestation, modifying, transforming and enriching them. The object is not to resume the course of a pre-colonial history by erasing from historical memory and present reality the experience of colonialism: this would be not only archaic and utopian, it would in fact be reactionary even to pretend that this is possible. Rather, the

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task is to ground one's historical consciousness in the immanent forms of social development that run through Indian history and from that standpoint to engage our colonial experience in a process of struggle—negating and superseding that experience by appropriating it on one's own terms

This agenda implies the relegation of the universal categories of social formations into a temporary state of suspension, or rather a state of unresolved tension. But this again is a task that is fundamental to the historian's practice. The relation between history and the theoretical disciplines of the social sciences is necessarily one where the structural neatness of the latter is constantly disturbed and refashioned by the intransigent material of the former. My plea, then, is also one which calls for the historian to take up his or her proper role as agent provocateur among social scientists.

THE POTENTIAL RICHNESS OF AN INDIAN HISTORY OF PEASANT STRUGGLE

A calumny was spread by European writers on India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the effect that because of the lack of a historical consciousness among Indians, there existed next to no material on Indian history, save a few court chronicles, hagiographies and genealogical tables of questionable veracity. This misrepresentation ought not to be attributed solely to the malicious intentions of the colonial mind to malign the character of a conquered people. There were more profound difficulties with the very conception of history as a form of knowledge in post-Enlightenment Europe. Judged from the European standpoint, the overwhelming mass of material out of which the institutions and practices of social relations among the Indian people were fashioned, and which survived as palpable evidence of a living past, was simply not recognised as valid historical material. All evidence which did not fit into the linear order of progression of State-forms defined by principalities, kingdoms and empires was relegated to the exotic, timeless domain of Indian ethnology, where history played only a marginal role.

We now know that the situation is quite the opposite. The variety of structural forms of social relations in India, the intricacy of their interconnections, the multiple layers and degrees of differentiation, the ideological forms of identity and difference and the long course of the historical evolution of these forms through social struggle are stamped on the living beliefs and practices of the people. In its sheer vastness and intricacy, this material is incomparably richer than what is contained in the received histories of Europe, a fact which the efflorescence of modern anthropology in the period after World War II has brought home to the European consciousness. In fact, the recent attempt to exhume a 'popular history' of Europe from the rubble of a dead past has been provoked precisely by this challenge thrown by the new sciences of anthropology and linguistics, working on the material

of non-European societies, to the accepted dogmas of post-Enlightenment European knowledge

Now that there is a much greater eagerness to face up to this evidence as historical material, its very richness forces us to throw up our hands and declare that it is much too complex. Every practising social scientist of India will confess to this feeling of inadequacy and helplessness. For colonial ethnographers, this was only evidence of the orderless *mélange* that was the mysterious Orient, and for colonial administrators additional proof of the historical necessity to impose linearity and order on an ungovernable society. For Indian nationalists, this was evidence of the greatness of the indigenous tradition which was capable, they said, of absorbing diverse social forms into a single unity without destroying the marks of difference. Needless to say, the colonial view tended to emphasise the inherent disorderliness of Indian society and its lack of a unified consciousness, while the nationalists glorified the absorptive capacity without taking notice of the considerable internal struggles which marked the process of absorption.

For those of us who face up to this problem today, the feeling of unmanageable complexity is, if we care to think of it, nothing other than the result of the inadequacy of the theoretical apparatus with which we work. Those analytical instruments were fashioned primarily out of the process of understanding historical developments in Europe. When those instruments now meet with the resistance of an intractably complex material, the fault surely is not of the Indian material but of the imported instruments. When the day comes when the vast storehouse of Indian social history will become comprehensible to the scientific consciousness, we will have achieved along the way a fundamental restructuring of the edifice of European social philosophy as it exists today. That too is part of the already ambitious agenda which I have begun to propound.

The second point of strength of the Indian material on peasant struggle arises, curiously enough, from an apparent weakness. There is a common tendency to regard the evidence of open revolts of the peasantry in India as insignificant when compared to the historical experience of medieval Europe or to that of neighbouring China. One must, however, be careful in judging the nature of this insufficiency. An American scholar, for instance, has recently declared that a history of peasant insurgency in India is a non-starter because, he says, there has never been a peasant revolt in India which was anything more than local and brief.¹ The fact is, first of all, that the number of such 'local' revolts is quite considerable, and from about the seventeenth century right through the period of British rule the accounts of several hundred peasant revolts from all over the country exist in the historical records. Second, what appears to be only 'localised' in the context of a vast country like India may often be found to involve a territory and a rebel population larger than those in even the most

famous peasant revolts in European history. The crucial difference lies elsewhere. It is undoubtedly true that peasant revolts in India do not seem to have the same political impact on the evolution of State-forms or on legal-proprietary relations as they do in Europe or China.² An important reason for this is that dominance in Indian society was not exercised exclusively, or even primarily, through the legal forms of sovereign power embodied in the institutions of the State or of feudal estates. Consequently, resistance was not restricted only to the domain of legal-political relations. The study of peasant struggles in India must therefore encompass a field of social relations far wider than what is conventionally regarded as appropriate in European history. Once again, therefore, what the Indian material calls for is an opening up and restructuring of the received disciplinary boundaries for the study of peasant movements.

THE IMMEDIATE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

A good point to begin the story of this project is the debate between colonialist and nationalist historiographies about the character of the movement for Indian independence. If I may state the issues of this debate in their bare essentials, colonialist historians sought to demonstrate that by introducing modern education, a modern economic infrastructure and forms of organisation, and above all the institutions and legal procedures of a modern state, it was colonial rule which had in effect bequeathed independent nationhood upon India. The so-called 'freedom struggle' was described as nothing more than squabbles among Indian elites, mobilising the support of sections of the common people on the basis of traditional ties of clientage, to secure the fruits of political power. In reply, the nationalist historians stressed the overall character of the colonial exploitation of the Indian people as a whole, the impediments imposed by this exploitative process on the full development of the potential for economic growth, the role of the nationalist leadership in mobilising and uniting the mass of the people to resist and overthrow colonial rule and the efforts by the colonial power to keep the people divided. Nationalist historians did not doubt the intrinsic value of the institutions of 'modernity' which accompanied colonial rule, they only emphasised the need to remove the exploitative nature of the colonial connection and to establish self-government as the necessary means for the full development of 'modernity'.

There was another area where the colonialist and nationalist discourses shared the same premises. This was with regard to the peasantry—the overwhelming mass of the Indian people. To the colonial mind, the Indian peasants were simple, ignorant, exploited by landlords, traders and moneylenders, respectful of authority, grateful to those in power who cared for and protected them, but also volatile in temperament, superstitious and often fanatical, easily aroused by agitators and troublemakers from among the Indian elite who wanted

to use them for their narrow political designs. For nationalists, too, the peasants were simple and ignorant, unaware of the fact that their poverty was the result of the exploitative nature of colonial rule and therefore in need of being woken up to a new consciousness, of being guided and led into effective political action by a nationalist organisation. This was a necessary task if the opposition to colonial rule was to acquire the form of a mass movement, but it was also a difficult and dangerous task because the ignorance and volatility of the peasantry could easily lead it astray. In proceeding towards their opposed political objectives, therefore, both colonial and nationalist politics thought of the peasantry as an object of their strategies, to be acted upon, controlled and appropriated within their respective structures of State power.

As these rival historiographical practices proceeded to analyse and interpret the politics of the Indian national movement, it became apparent that neither the competitive factional interests of Indian elite groups nor the efforts of the Congress leadership to arouse an all-embracing nationalist consciousness among the entire people could explain the dynamics of the involvement of the peasantry in anti-colonial movements. Indeed, several studies published in the 1970s and the early 1980s on the course of the Congress movement among peasants in different parts of India showed, some explicitly and others implicitly, the existence of a structure of duality in the nationalist mass movement.³ There seemed to be a coming together of two domains of politics. On the one hand, there was the domain of the formally organised political parties and associations, moving within the institutional processes of the bourgeois State forms introduced by colonial rule and seeking to use their representative power over the mass of the people to replace the colonial State by a bourgeois nation-State. On the other side was the domain of peasant politics where beliefs and actions did not fit into the grid of 'interests' and 'aggregation of interests' which constituted the world of bourgeois representative politics. Seen from the former domain, the latter could only appear as the realm of spontaneity, which was of course nothing more than to acknowledge that the specific determinants of the domain of peasant political activity remained incomprehensible from the standpoint of bourgeois politics.

Specifically, two major aspects of the mass movement of nationalism was brought out by these studies. First, the meeting of these two domains of politics was marked by an unresolved contradiction. There was undoubtedly a coming together of the two domains, so that the organisation, ideology and programmes of the formally constituted political domain underwent considerable transformation with the entry of a mass peasant element, just as the peasantry too became aware of an entirely new world of political issues, languages, leaders and forms of action. And yet the very union of these two domains was of a form which required that they be kept apart. While the nationalist

leadership sought to mobilise the peasantry as an anti-colonial force in its project of establishing a nation-state, it was ever distrustful of the consequences of agitational politics among the peasants, suspicious of their supposed ignorance and backward consciousness, careful to keep their participation limited to the forms of bourgeois representative politics in which peasants would be regarded as a part of the nation but distanced from the institutions of the State. On the other hand, while peasants became aware of the hitherto unknown world of nationalist agitation, they made sense of it not in terms of the discursive forms of modern bourgeois politics but rather by translating it into their own codes, so that the language of nationalism underwent a quite radical transformation of meaning in the peasant domain of politics.⁴ The meeting of the two domains did not therefore mean that the first domain was able to absorb and appropriate its other within a single homogeneous unity; the unity itself remained fragmented and fraught with tension. The second aspect of the meeting of the two domains was that it did not bring about a linear development of the consciousness of the peasantry into a new sense of nationhood. While peasants in different parts of India became aware, albeit in varying degrees, of the realities of nationalist politics, their participation in it seemed to be marked by radical breaks and often reversals, for spells of militant anti-colonial action by peasants were often followed by bitter sectarian strife, sometimes in the course of a single movement, and at other times by spells of inexplicable quiescence. Both of these aspects of peasant participation in nationalist politics pointed in the same direction: the need for a critique of both colonialist and nationalist historiographies by bringing in the peasantry as a subject of history, endowed with its own distinctive forms of consciousness and making sense of and acting upon the world on its own terms.

PEASANT INSURGENTS OF COLONIAL INDIA

The problem was formulated specifically in Guha,⁵ using the material on peasant insurgency in the period immediately preceding that of nationalist mass movements. From the series of peasants' revolts in colonial India between 1783 and 1900, Guha undertook to isolate the ideological invariants of peasant consciousness and their relational unity—that is to say, its paradigmatic form. He began by assuming that the domination and exploitation under which the peasant lived and worked existed within a relation of power. There was thus an opposed pair: on the one side, the dominators (the State or the landlords or moneylenders), and on the other, the peasants. A relational opposition of power necessarily meant that the dominated had to be granted their own domain of subjectivity, where they were autonomous, undominated. If it were not so, the dominators would, in the exercise of their domination, wholly consume and obliterate the dominated. Dominance then would no longer exist within a social relation of power with its own conditions of reproduction. In this

specific case, therefore, the peasantry had to be granted its autonomous domain.

Where was one to locate this domain? If domination is one aspect of this relation of power, its opposed aspect must be resistance. It is the dialectical opposition of the two that gives this relation its unity. It is also this opposition which creates the possibility for a movement within that relation, and thus makes it possible for there to be a history of the relation of dominance and subordination. In searching for the characteristic form of the autonomous domain of peasant consciousness, Guha was led to a study of the aspect of resistance. This did not mean that resistance was more important, or more true, than domination. On the contrary, by placing the forms of peasant consciousness within a dialectical relation of power, peasant consciousness would be assigned its proper theoretical value. Its significance was to be established only in relation to its other, viz the consciousness of the dominator.

If resistance was the aspect of the power relation through which the peasantry expressed its distinct and autonomous identity, as opposed to that of its dominators, where were we to find it in the historical material available to us? Precisely in the material on peasant insurgency. That is where the insurgent consciousness left its imprint on that of its dominator, where the dominator was forced expressly to 'recognise' its other. Thus the inquiry into the characteristic forms of peasant consciousness became in Guha a study of the elementary aspects of peasant insurgency. The study of peasant insurgency was, in other words, a methodological procedure by which one obtained an access into peasant consciousness, expressed through its resistance at the point of insurgency, and recognised as an antagonistic force in the historical records prepared by the dominant classes. The instituted knowledge of society, as it exists in recorded history, is the knowledge obtained by the dominant classes in their exercise of power. The dominated, by virtue of their very powerlessness, have no means of recording their knowledge within those instituted processes, except as an object of the exercise of power. Thus, Guha used the colonial discourse of counter-insurgency to read, as a mirror image, the discourse of insurgency.

He identified six 'elementary aspects', as he called them, of the insurgent peasant consciousness, viz negation, ambiguity, modality, solidarity, transmission and territoriality. The insurgent consciousness was, first of all, a 'negative consciousness', in the sense that its identity was expressed solely through an opposition, i.e., its difference from and antagonism to its dominators. It was an identity whose limits were fixed by the very conditions of subordination under which the peasantry lived and worked, only the relations were inverted; the signs of domination, such as the imposition of taxes or rent or of the power to punish, now became the targets of resistance. It was a characteristic feature of peasant rebellions that the urge of the oppressed to assert a denial of authority occurred 'not in terms of his

own culture but his enemy's'. Second, the forms of resistance involved a high degree of ambiguity. Precisely because relations of domination were inverted at the moment of insurgency, the signs of rebellion were liable to be misread by the rulers who would fail to distinguish them from such 'normal' signs of aberrant behaviour as crime. But unlike crime, 'rebellions are necessarily and invariably public and communal events'; 'crime and insurgency derive from two very different codes of violence'. Third, insurgent peasant movements had their characteristic modalities or forms. On the one hand, the political and yet innately negative character of inverting the dominant relations of power took the form of destroying the signs of authority, such as the police station or the landlord's rent-collection office or the moneylender's house. Specifically for the case of colonial India, Guha identified four forms of destruction, viz. wrecking, burning, eating and looting. On the other hand, the negativity of the insurgent consciousness of the peasant was also expressed in the setting up of a rebel authority, in the image of the authority which it replaced but inverted, equally public in character and with its own powers to impose sanctions and levies on the community. Fourth, the self-definition of the insurgent peasant, his awareness of belonging to a collectivity that was separate from and opposed to his enemies, lay in the aspect of solidarity. Its specific expression varied from rebellion to rebellion, sometimes even from one phase to another within the same rebellion. Often it was expressed in terms of ethnicity or kinship or some such affinal category. Sometimes one can read in it the awareness of a class. But solidarity was the total expression of the communal character of an insurgency. Fifth, within the solidarity thus defined, the message of insurgency was transmitted with an ease and rapidity which the ruling classes often found bewildering, but this too had its characteristic channels. Rumour, for instance, was one such channel, in which the source of a message was anonymous and unknown and which involved no distinction between the communicator and his audience. Absolutely transitive, rumour, as distinct from news, was 'an autonomous type of popular discourse'. Finally, the solidarity of an insurgent peasantry also occupied a specific geographical space. The limits of this geographical space was determined, on the one hand, negatively by the rebel's perception of the geographical spread of the enemy's authority, i.e., by a principle of exclusion, and on the other, positively by a notion of the ethnic space occupied by the insurgent community, i.e., by the principle of solidarity. The intersection of these two spaces defined the territoriality of the insurgency.

THE NOTION OF COMMUNITY

In all these aspects which Guha identified, there is a single unifying idea which gives to peasant insurgency its fundamental social character. This is the notion of community. Every aspect expresses itself in its specific political form through the principle of community

Whether it is the negatively constituted character of the forms and targets of insurgent action, defined by applying the criterion of 'we' and 'they', or whether it is the lightning-like communicability of the message of rebellion, or whether it is the rebel's self-definition of the territorial space of insurgency, it is a principle of community which gives to all these specific aspects their fundamental constitutive character as the purposive political acts of a collective consciousness. It is this principle again which enables us to read from the actions of a rebellious peasantry at the moment of insurgency the total constitutive character of a peasant consciousness, to relate those actions to the forms of everyday social existence of the peasantry.

It is important to stress this point, because what the principle of community as the characteristic unifying feature of peasant consciousness does is directly to place it at the opposite pole to a bourgeois consciousness. The latter operates from the premise of the individual and a notion of his interests (or, in more fashionable vocabulary, his preferences). Solidarities in bourgeois politics are built up through an aggregative process by which individuals come together into alliances on the basis of common interests (or shared preferences). It is quite the opposite in peasant consciousness. There solidarities do not grow because individuals feel they can come together with others because of their common individual interests. On the contrary, individuals are enjoined to act within a collectivity because, it is believed, there already exist bonds of solidarity which tie them together. Collective action does not flow from a contract among individuals; rather, individual identities themselves are derived from membership in a community.

The implication is that peasant consciousness cannot be understood in its own constitutive aspects if we continue to reduce it to the paradigm of bourgeois rationality. We must grant that peasant consciousness has its own paradigmatic form, which is not only different from that of bourgeois consciousness, but in fact is its very other. This is a central theoretical proposition brought out by Guha's book, and it poses a basic challenge to the methodological procedures followed not only by bourgeois economists and sociologists (including those of the Chayanovian and 'moral economy' varieties) searching for the 'rational peasant' (however defined), but also by many Marxist scholars writing on the agrarian question.

This notion of community cannot be immediately assigned a single determinate value based on a determinate social institution such as totemism or caste or religious denomination. The boundaries or forms of solidarity in peasant rebellions have no single determinate character which can be directly deduced either from its immediate socio-economic context or from its cultural world. On the contrary, the cultural apparatus of signs and meanings—the language, in the broadest sense—available to a peasant consciousness, far from being narrow and inflexible, is capable of a vast range of transformation to

enable it to understand, and to act within, varying contexts, both of subordination and of resistance. It is precisely this ability which makes insurgency the purposeful political work of a deliberate and active insurgent consciousness. Without it, it would in fact be 'objectified' easily, by reducing it to its determinate institutional form—tribe, caste, religious denomination, locality, whatever. Such a reductionism is grossly to underestimate, and in fact misunderstand, the ideological resilience and innovativeness of peasant consciousness.

THE CONCRETE FORMS OF COMMUNITY

Which brings us to the next part of my agenda. Guha has given us a paradigmatic form of the insurgent peasant consciousness. Its contours are drawn from a reading of the material on peasant revolts in colonial India from the point of view of the peasant as an active and conscious subject of history. But because of his objective of isolating an invariant structural form, he has not attempted to give us a *history* of this consciousness as a movement of self-transformation. Rather, having found an access into the structural form of this consciousness in its aspect of autonomy, he has given us the theoretical basis to ask the appropriate question about its history.

The first area where this interrogation can begin is precisely that which binds together the structure of peasant consciousness as described by Guha, viz the community. We have seen that Guha, quite correctly, does not give to this community any immediately determinate content; or rather, to put it more accurately, while he describes the community in the historical context of a particular peasant rebellion in the relevant terms of clan, tribe, caste, village, etc., he leaves the theoretical conceptualisation of the community in peasant consciousness as a formal construct, abstract and empty. It is necessary now to attempt to give to this crucial concept its proper theoretical content. We already have something to go on. We know, for instance, that the identification of the enemy in peasant revolts, the separation of the 'they' from the 'we', occurs within a framework where distinct communities are seen as being in antagonistic relations with each other. It is the same framework of communities which provides room for the establishment of solidarities and alliances on the side of the rebels (and, for that matter, on the side of the enemy), and even of collaboration and treachery. The alliances are not seen as the result of contracts based on common interests; rather, they are believed to be the necessary duty of groups bound together by mutual bonds of kinship 'You are our brothers. Do you join with all expedition.' This invitation of the first group of rebels in the Rangpur uprising of 1783 to the peasants of neighbouring villages was, in fact, the standard form of insurgent alliance in peasant rebellions all over India. It applied even in the case of a perceived breach of mutual duty; this was no breach of contract. When the villagers of Kallas wrote to those of Akola blaming them for breaking the solidarity of the movement during the Deccan

revolt of 1875, they did not appeal to a mutuality of interest. Rather, they said, 'it is very wrong of you people to keep communication with persons who are deemed as excluded from the community of the village . . . As we consider Kallas and Akola as one village, we have made the above suggestions to you.'

We also know that the boundaries of solidarity, the line separating the 'we' from the 'they', can shift according to changing contexts of struggle Pandey⁶ has given us an account of how a strife between Rajput landlords and Muslim weavers in a small town in Uttar Pradesh in the middle of the nineteenth century quickly changed into the solidarity of the entire town in its defence against outside attack and back again to internal strife, all within the space of a few weeks, without any apparent sign that the people of the town saw anything anomalous in these rapid changes in the boundaries of solidarity Hardiman,⁷ Sarkar⁸ and Chatterjee⁹ have also considered this problem of shifting boundaries of solidarity in terms of the changing context of struggle What is necessary now is to formulate the concept of community within a set of systematic relationships signifying the mutual identity and difference of social groups.

In the Indian context, the system of castes seems to represent an obvious paradigmatic form for signifying identity and difference. On the one hand, castes are mutually separate as though they were distinct species of natural beings, and on the other, they are mutually bound together as parts, arranged hierarchically, within a social whole. In traditional social anthropology, to the extent that these relations were seen as constituting a system, the dominant view has been that it provides a framework for harmonising the mutual interdependence of separate groups through the inculcation of a set of shared values about the unity of the system as a whole.¹⁰ What is not recognised is the equally systematic nature of the rejection of the supposedly 'shared' values by groups that are inferior in caste ranking. There seems to be ample evidence to enable us to ground the system of castes within the totality of power relations, for the changing relations between castes and the periodic attempts to redefine the content of ethical conduct in the Indian religions bear the signs of a continuing struggle, and their temporary resolutions, within social relations of domination and subordination. In short, we have here the possibility of linking a history of peasant struggle with a *history* of the caste system, and through it, with a history of religious beliefs and practices.

There are also strong reasons to suspect that the system of castes operates as a paradigmatic form not merely in the domain of relations between *jatis* within the fold of the Brahmanical religion; it is probably the case that it is the general cultural form of conceptualising and ordering the relations of identity and difference between several kinds of social groupings. Significantly, the word *jatis* in most Indian languages can be used to designate not merely a caste, but caste

agglomerations, tribes, race, linguistic groups, religious groups, nationalities, nations. Anthropologists have, of course, often noted the existence of caste or caste-like forms not only among religious groups such as Buddhists, Jains or the medieval devotional sects which emerged in opposition to the Brahmanical religion, but also among Indian Muslims and Christians. But this is a point of more general significance: the extent to which a caste-like system provides the cultural form for conceptualising relations of domination, as well as of resistance, between social groups needs to be examined in their concreteness.

Apart from this question of identifying the boundaries of the community in varying contexts of struggle, there is the other aspect of the internal structure of the community in peasant consciousness. It is clear that the notion of community, especially among the non-tribal agrarian population, is not egalitarian, even in the matter of rights in the basic means of production, namely, land. For most parts of India, in the sector of settled peasant cultivation, something like a fifth or more of the population, belonging to the lowest castes, have never had any recognised rights in land. But the unity of a community was nevertheless established by recognising the rights of subsistence of all sections of the population, albeit a differential right entailing differential duties and privileges. The point then is that the notion of community as itself a differentiated unity operates not merely between peasants as a community and their dominators, but between peasants themselves. The full range of possibilities of alliances and oppositions, with the boundaries of community shifting with changing contexts of struggle, may then be said to operate in relations between sections of the peasantry. The point goes against a populist idealisation of the peasantry as an egalitarian and harmonious community, free from internal dissension and struggle.

THE MOVEMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

I have argued, then, that by studying the history of peasant rebellions from the point of view of the peasant as an active and conscious subject of history, we obtain an access into that aspect of his consciousness where he is autonomous, undominated. Thereby, we have the means to conceptualise the unity of that consciousness as grounded in a relationship of power, i.e., of domination and subordination. Peasant consciousness, then, is a contradictory unity of two aspects: in one he is subordinate, where he accepts the immediate reality of power relations that dominate and exploit him; on the other, he denies those conditions of subordination and asserts his autonomy. I have also argued that the community is the space where this contradictory unity of peasant consciousness makes its appearance. So far we have merely characterised this community in the abstract and formal sense. But there is sufficient historical material to begin a more concrete conceptualisation of the community, itself differentiated, as the *site* of

peasant struggle, where respective rights and duties are established and contested.

Already this gives us a path of investigation that is likely to deviate from the conventional ways of studying peasant revolts in Europe. In the first place, the domain of legal-political relations constituted by the State will not be the exclusive, perhaps not even the principal, site of peasant struggle. Second, the domain of community will appear as intricately differentiated and layered, with a structural form that affords far greater flexibility, and hence strategic opportunities for both peasants and the dominant classes, in the making of alliances and oppositions than in the 'peasant community' in feudal Europe. Third, in the long intervals between open armed rebellions by peasants or the spread of the great heterodox religious movements, one is likely to notice, if one looks for it, a continuing and pervasive struggle between peasants and the dominant classes in everyday life. The forms of such struggle will range from absenteeism, desertion, selective disobedience, sabotage and strikes to verbal forms such as slander, feigned ignorance, satire and abuse—the 'Brechtian forms of class struggle', as an anthropologist working on the Malayan peasantry has recently described them.¹¹ The storehouse of popular culture in India has preserved an enormously rich collection of the material and ideological artifacts of such everyday forms of peasant protest, which have never been incorporated into the study of the processes of subordination and resistance within which Indian peasants have lived and struggled.

We now come to our final, and crucial question. If our objective is to write the history of peasant struggle in the form of a history of peasants as active and conscious subjects, then their consciousness must also have a history. Their experience of varying forms of subordination, and of resistance, their attempts to cope with changing forms of material and ideological life both in their everyday existence and in those flashes of open rebellion, must leave their imprint on consciousness as a process of learning and development. Some recent scholars like Scott¹² have sought to privilege the everyday forms of resistance over those of open rebellion because the former are supposedly more enduring and, in the long run, more effective in their slow and almost imperceptible transformation of the conditions of subordination. It may be premature to dismiss this argument on *a priori* grounds, but the fact remains that the domain of the quotidian, which is also the domain of the seeming perpetuity of subordination, is circumscribed by a limit beyond which lies the extraordinary, apocalyptic, timeless moment of a world turned upside down. It is the historical record of those brief moments of open rebellion which gives us a glimpse of that undominated region in peasant consciousness and enables us to see the everyday and the extraordinary as parts of a single unity in historical time.

To push the point a little further, we could argue that it is always the spectre of an open rebellion by the peasantry which haunts the consciousness of the dominant classes in agrarian societies and shapes and modifies their forms of exercise of domination. This was true of the colonial State in the period of British rule in India, just as it is true today, notwithstanding the establishment of universal adult franchise. Of course, the nature and forms of domination of peasants have changed quite fundamentally in the last hundred years or so. The older forms of feudal extraction and ties of bondage have been replaced to a large extent by new forms of extraction mediated through the mechanisms of the market and of fiscal policies. These changes themselves have not come about solely through reforms at the top; a whole series of peasant struggles from the days of colonial rule have acted upon the structures of domination in order to change and modify them. Even the new political institutions of representative government, struggling to give political form to the material of social relations of a large agrarian country, are themselves being shaped into figures that would be unrecognisable in the liberal democracies of the West. To give one example, the phenomenon of massive and uniform swings in the vote across large regions, which has been a characteristic of several recent elections in India, is of a magnitude and geographical spread unknown in Western liberal democracies and inexplicable in terms of the normal criteria of voting behaviour. Do we see in this the form of an insurgent peasant consciousness which, having learnt in its own way the mechanisms of the new systems of power, is now expressing itself through entirely novel methods of political action?

An Indian history of peasant struggle will tell us a great deal more than simply the story of medieval peasant rebellions. For it is a history which constitutes our living and active present. It is a history which will tell us why when peasants identified the colonial State as their enemy, as they did in 1857 or 1942, they could be so much more radical and thoroughgoing in their opposition than their more enlightened compatriots. It is a history which will educate those of us who claim to be their educators. Indeed, an Indian history of peasant struggle is a fundamental part of the real history of our people; the task is for the Indian historian to perceive in this a consciousness of his own self.

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- 12 Ibid

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*Subaltern Consciousness and Populism:
Two Approaches in the Study of Social
Movements in India*

The sociology of social movements is a growing edge of the discipline in more recent decades. However, studying tribal and peasant revolts or movements was a dominant tradition both in the history and in the ethnography of India for quite some time. The pioneering accounts on the Bhumij revolts and the Kol insurrection in Chotanagpur by J C Jha,¹ Kalikankar Datta's work on the Santal insurrection,² B B Kling's study of the 'Blue Mutiny'³—the indigo disturbances (1859-62)—in Bengal, and Ravinder Kumar's on the Deccan Riots (1875),⁴ come to mind almost immediately. The tradition continued even thereafter. Studies on the Tanabagat or the Birsa Munda and his movement,⁵ the Rampa rebellion of 1924 and of course Sunil Sen's study⁶ of the sharecroppers' struggle in Bengal must also be mentioned additionally. Similarly, studies by Majid Siddiqi⁷ and Kapil Kumar⁸ on the agrarian/peasant revolt led by Baba Ramchandra in Pratapgarh and Faizabad districts of Oudh have notably continued the same trend in more recent years. The list is only illustrative and not exhaustive.

If one looks at the approaches or frameworks of analysis in the studies mentioned above, then, barring Ravinder Kumar, who has used the framework of class analysis meaningfully in studying the anti-moneylender Deccan Riots, most of the other pioneering studies are either pure histories or ethnographies of tribal/peasant protest movements. Rarely have the researchers gone into conceptual discussions and they have not found it necessary to use or examine any of the prevailing theoretical-analytical paradigms. Notable exceptions to this are the studies by Siddiqi,⁹ Kapil Kumar,¹⁰ Gyanendra Pandey¹¹ and this author¹² who have started an important debate on the precise linkage between the peasantry and the Indian National Congress, and Gandhi in particular. However, the middle peasant thesis (like that of Eric Wolf and Hamza Alavi)¹³ and Barrington Moore's¹⁴ hypothesis on the role of commercial agriculture as a factor conducive for peasant mobilization have been thoroughly examined by only a few of the studies referred to above.¹⁵ This is not to

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underrate the value of other studies. Most of them have brought to light enormous source material which otherwise would have remained unknown to the present generation of social scientists. Their accounts are the most authentic reconstructions of the peasant revolts in India in the 1920s and 1930s, but most of them belong basically to narrative history or ethnography. Some of them, like Siddiqi, Pandey and Kapil Kumar, do identify and probe the historical conditions that facilitated the progressive development of consciousness of the insurgent peasantry or tribals who were the main actors of those movements. However, barring exceptions, such studies seldom transcend specificity and are rarely inclined to get into questions of theory and generality as if they are irrelevant to the history and sociology of social movements.

Only one example of this tendency should suffice to stress the point. Suresh Singh's work¹⁶ on the Birsa Munda movement, which has produced abundant evidence of the strong millenarian elements in the Birsait movement, makes no reference to the concept of 'millennium' at all.¹⁷ To a certain extent, Stephen Fuch's study on the Indian aboriginals has gone into the millenarian movements among Indian tribals under the influence of Christianity, but only superficially. Similarly, the notions of 'primitive rebels' and 'social banditry' introduced by Eric Hobsbawm,¹⁸ have not been used fruitfully by any researcher of tribal and peasant revolts or insurgencies until Ranajit Guha and his colleagues launched the 'subaltern studies' approach in a big way. Getting immersed in the depths of the micro-level reality and not rising above it in order to enter the realm of theorisation and conceptualisation was the tendency characteristic of the mainstream sociology and social anthropology as well as of history and ethnography that we in India received as a part of the imperialist legacy for the social sciences. The need to identify and evaluate the relevance of such paradigms, at least the neglected ones, is therefore an urgent task that cannot be overemphasised.

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to only two of the potentially useful analytical paradigms for studying tribal/ethnic movements or peasant revolts in India. These approaches have unfortunately remained neglected at least by the mainstream sociology and social anthropology in India. It is high time we took cognizance of them and entered into paradigmatic dialogue.

SUBALTERN STUDIES

An important approach to the study of tribal/peasant movements has been enunciated by Ranajit Guha and his historian colleagues in India and abroad. Broadly designated as 'subaltern historiography', this approach seeks to restore a balance by highlighting the role of the politics of the people as against elite politics played in Indian history. Thus, 'elite' and 'people' are viewed as binary domains to constitute a structural dichotomy. Adherents to this approach argue that the elitist historiography, whether of the neo-colonialist or of the neo-

nationalist variety, has always overstated the part the elite has played in building Indian nationalism, but it has failed to acknowledge, far less properly interpret, the contributions made by the people (masses) on their own, independently of the elite.¹⁹ Parallel to the domain of elite politics there always existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society but the 'subaltern' classes and groups constituting the masses of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in the town and country—the people²⁰

Subaltern historiography treats 'people' (subalternity) as an autonomous domain that originates neither from elite politics nor depends on them. Therefore, whereas the mobilisation in the domain of elite politics is achieved vertically, in that of subaltern politics it is achieved horizontally. Guha, however, does admit that given the diversity of its social composition, the ideological element in the subaltern domain is not uniform in quality and density and at times such diversities lead to pursuit of sectional interests, economistic diversions as well as sectarian splits that tend to undermine the horizontal alliances in this domain. Therefore, Guha also clarifies that the two domains have not been sealed off from each other but often overlapped mainly because the elite domain always tried to mobilise and integrate them but primarily to fight for elite objectives; however, the subaltern masses managed to break away from the elite control and put their characteristic stamp on campaigns initiated by the elite groups.²¹

The whole thrust of subaltern historiography is on reconstructing 'the other history', i.e., history of people's politics and movements and their attempts to make their own history. As a brilliant demonstration of how the 'other history' could be constructed Guha has offered us a study of the peasant insurgency in colonial India.²² Somehow, in the din over the polemical aspects of the concept of 'subalternity', the deeper insights and distinct analytical approach Guha's own study has offered have been lost sight of. The study provides us with a useful framework for studying social movements in general and tribal/peasant insurgencies in particular. It is, of course, anchored in subaltern historiography for understanding the complex phenomena of peasant or ethnic protest movements—or at least a significant part of it—in contemporary India. It is one of those serious pieces of social science scholarship which has raised many theoretical and methodological issues that must not only be acknowledged but also debated seriously.

While analysing the tribal and peasant insurgencies in colonial India, Guha makes no secret of the fact that his approach to the study of social movements basically forms a part of the general tradition of scientific Marxism—but a variant of it quite obviously deduced from A. Gramsci's formulations²³ that are refreshingly original and hence intellectually very stimulating. With all the candour that is often associated with a Marxist, Guha believes that the task of

historiography is to interpret the past in order to change the present world and that such a change involves a radical transformation of consciousness. He therefore warns social scientists and activists not to view peasant or tribal insurgents merely as 'objects' of history but to treat them as 'makers' of their own history—endowed with a transformative consciousness of their own.

In spelling out his 'subaltern' approach Guha naturally hits out at the conventional discourses on peasant/tribal insurgencies which hitherto have served in the colonialist historiography as merely an apology for 'law and order'. Those attempts to understand insurgent movements were simply aimed at 'counter-insurgency' to prevent their occurrence in future. The sense of history was thus converted by the conventional discourses into an element of 'administrative concern'.²⁴ At the same time Guha is equally critical of orthodox Marxist historiography for its failure to recognise the role of pure spontaneity in history. His target is clearly set on all those recent peasant studies (i.e., studies on peasant movements including revolts or insurgencies) which have emphasised 'organisation', 'leadership', and 'ideology' as the key elements in the formation of rebels' consciousness and have tended to treat the insurgencies as 'pre-political' phenomena.²⁵ Guha observes that those who do not recognize the first glimmer of consciousness in apparently spontaneous and unstructured movements of the peasant or tribal masses and often brand them as 'pre-political', commit a serious error of judgement.

Are the peasant and tribal insurgencies in colonial India 'pre-political' or 'political' phenomena? To Guha the term 'pre-political' is as misleading as it is value-laden; it helps us the least in understanding the experience of such movements in colonial India. Tribal or peasant insurgencies have to be understood in the backdrop of the attempts of the colonial State to revitalise landlordism and to promote parasitic landlordism. The peasant and tribal tenantry rebelled against *sarkari*, *sahukari*, and *zamindari* oppression to which they were subjected. The uprisings of Bhumij, the Kol insurrection, the Santal revolt of 1855, the indigo disturbances of 1859-62 and the Deccan riots of 1875 in the nineteenth century come to mind almost immediately. The subaltern insurgents were then trying to break and destroy the then existing structure of power relationships.²⁶ Hence the insurgents' action was no less political than the politics of the liberal reformist struggles of the 'no-rent' or 'no-tax' variety under the banner of the Congress or the Left-wing insurrectionary struggles of peasants (such as the Tebhaga or Telangana struggles) of the twentieth century in India. Guha, however, admits that 'none of the basic elements (i.e., leadership, aims, programmes and ideology) of the insurgencies of the 1793-1900 period (roughly from the Rangpur uprising to the Birsa Munda movement) could compare in *maturity and sophistication* with those of the *historically more advanced movements of the twentieth century*'²⁷ (emphasis added). Thus, he too accepts the fact that the

twentieth century movements of the peasantry and tribals have been qualitatively different and decisively *more advanced*—which hopefully refers to the level of consciousness, organisation and ideological articulation. If the argument is that the difference between the two sets of movements that we designate 'pre-political' and 'political' is to be seen essentially in relative degrees and not in absolute terms, then one can have little disagreement with Guha. But if he is suggesting that such a qualitative difference does not exist then it is difficult to agree with him. Those who treat the nineteenth century peasant or tribal insurgencies as 'pre-political phenomena' would also agree that just because the sporadic and spasmodic revolts failed to rise above localism, sectarianism and ethnicity does not take away from them either their essentially political character, or their significance in history.

Guha's main objective in studying insurgencies of the colonial period is to show how patterns of subordination and insubordination have run on parallel tracks throughout the colonial history of India, and how affirmation of domination or resistance, or insurgency and counter-insurgency have reinforced each other. It is not difficult to see the influence of Hobsbawm's works²⁸ and also of George Rude²⁹ on Guha's study. Guha has abstracted certain common forms and general ideas in the rebels' consciousness. These forms—in all six—are: 'negation' (implying formation of negative identity), 'ambiguity', 'modality', 'solidarity', 'transmission' and 'territoriality'. He draws his evidence to construct these paradigmatic forms from various peasant and tribal movements of the 1793-1900 period studied extensively by anthropologists, ethnographers and historians. Since Guha's framework has a heuristic value in studying a variety of tribal/ethnic or peasant movements it is necessary to deal with these six forms at some length.

The first elementary form of peasant or insurgent tribal consciousness is 'negation' which connotes that the rebel's identity is first found by him not in his own properties, but by the diminution and negation of those of his superiors. Such a negativity may not be a fully developed class consciousness, but taking a cue from Gramsci again, Guha regards negativity as the first glimmer of that consciousness.³⁰ Accompanied by the ability to discriminate friends from foes, negation often results in selective violence only against the perceived enemies. The *jaqueries* in France, the peasant wars in Germany³¹ and also the famous Luddite machine-breaking riots or Captain Swing type movements in England during the early phase of the Industrial Revolution³² portrayed the same negativity in which violence spread by analogy and transference.³³ In the Indian context, peasant and tribal insurgents often reversed or rejected the homological relations in feudal society; all traditional forms of respect, dress, writing, language-styles, etc., were turned upside down. These were insignia symbolic of the exclusive preserve of feudal monarchies, nobility from which the subaltern was

always debarred. The rebel's defiance of these structural rules (acts of inversion) was thus a negative assertion of his identity and consciousness³⁴

The second form—'ambiguity'—in Guha's scheme draws on the basic difference between 'crime' and 'insurgency', although the two have often been used synonymously in colonial historiography. To Guha, crime tends to be an individualistic or small group-oriented, but secretive or conspiratorial, action. In contrast, insurgency has a mass character which manifests publicly. The two acts derive from two different codes of violence, but since in the overt form the acted violence may be similar, there is an ambiguity in violence as an internal or integral part of insurgency.

'Modality'—the next (third) elementary aspect—is a logical extension of the public character of tribal or peasant insurgencies. Drawing on the episodes of the Pabna riots (1873), the Santal *hool* (1855) and the Deccan riots (1875), Guha shows how by electing 'rebel-nawabs' and the like, the insurgents truly searched for an alternative source of authority. It is often formalised by the general body of insurgents through ritual presentation of *nazranas* which marks validation and sacralisation of the rebel violence as a public service³⁵.

In the actual autonomous process of mobilisation, the pull of primordial loyalties or sentiments of kinship, ethnic community ties and co-residence often play a significant part. However, Guha has stressed the fact that 'it was only rarely that the mobilisation of an insurgent peasantry or a tribal group adopted so explicitly a religious form in colonial India as one might expect'.³⁶ The observation—both sweeping and hasty—is actually falsified by Guha's own evidence on the 1857 Mutiny and of course on the Birsa Munda movement which clearly showed the religious overtones of their agrarian distress coupled with ethnic identity.³⁷ Moreover, if Guha had carefully looked at the Moplah insurgencies from the 1830s to 1921³⁸ then he would have certainly qualified his claim regarding the strikingly 'secular' modality of such peasant or tribal uprisings.

It is true that no narrowly conceived economic interpretations can possibly explain some of the forms in which the rebel activity manifests. Guha has asserted that when subaltern sections resorted to burning, wrecking and destroying, the considerations of economic gain did not figure very prominently. But can this modality (relating to non-economic orientation) be stated as a general law? Is economic rationality absent totally in the insurgent's action and is it always overwhelmed by motives of power as exclusively as Guha suggests? How else do we account for the umpteen instances of plunder of goods and looting of cash by the Kols in Chotanagpur and by the Santals, the details of which have been furnished by Guha himself?³⁹ The plunder and loot are far from incidental acts of negativity or inversion but can certainly be tinged by it. Tribal or peasant insurgents do not simply aim at destroying the cultural insignia and symbols of power but they also

care for economic gains if and when opportunities come their way. In glorifying and sentimentalising the insurgents' actions, as Guha does, it is not always necessary to deny them their normal attributes of robust practical wisdom and economic rationality as the colonialist historiography often did. Quite paradoxically, Guha is caught in the same fallacy that his subaltern approach aims at demolishing.

In contrast to plunder and destruction as a modality, killings and bloodshed tend to be a rarer phenomenon and hence must not be treated as the principal feature of insurgent behavior. Guha argues: 'It is in fact counter-insurgency which makes killings as its principal modality.' The rarity of bloodshed in peasant or tribal insurgencies has been attributed by Guha not to their compassion but to their failure to overcome the inhibitions of the old semi-feudal culture and the spiritual conditions of their subalternity.⁴⁰

'Solidarity'—the next form in which the peasant or tribal insurgent's self-consciousness manifests itself—signifies separation of his own identity from that of his enemies. Although this form overlaps with negativity considerably, Guha has made two important points here. First, the quality of 'collective consciousness' (*à la* Durkheim) varies from one phase of insurgency to another. Secondly, class 'solidarity' and other solidarities (i.e., those emerging from ethnic, religious, caste or filial ties) are not mutually exclusive; rather 'these overlap as they did in most of the peasant uprisings or ethnic movements before 1900 because the dye of the traditional culture had not yet washed off the peasant/ethnic consciousness'. This is what Guha characterises as the duplex character of insurgency⁴¹ in which sometimes class and religion are intertwined (e.g., as in the Moplah uprisings) and sometimes ethnicity and class identities get fused as is best illustrated by the case of the Birsa Munda movement.⁴² In fact, Guha goes a step forward and argues that the Kol and Birsa rebellions stand apart from the rest of the tribal uprisings in the nineteenth century in that class solidarity had triumphed over ethnicity in those cases more decisively than in any other tribal uprising. Of course, Suresh Singh, whose evidence has been used by Guha, has himself not attempted a clearcut analysis of the Birsaite movement. Thus, Guha claims that the rebel consciousness in those instances projected well beyond the sense of tribe or caste.⁴³

The solidarity of the rebel peasant or tribal manifests in chastisement of traitors. 'Active collaboration is sired by insurgency no less than is rebel solidarity itself. Thus solidarity and collaboration (betrayal) close on each other in a figure of perfect symmetry. The rebel's hostility to traitor is thus an articulation of the rebel's own class consciousness',⁴⁴ which is similar to the identity being defined negatively.

In 'transmission' as a form/aspect of peasant or tribal insurgency, Guha deals essentially with the patterns of spread of insurgency. Through iconic and symbolic signs or even rumours, other subaltern

sections/groups are also contacted and drawn into uprising. Whether the rebels organise prayer meetings, beat their drums, flutes or horns, distribute branches of *sal* trees, or a fiery torch, or whether they distribute *chapatis*, *tel* (oil) or *sindur* (vermilion powder), all these were the most effective instruments of this transmission in the Kol, the Santal and the Birsait movements, in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, and also in the Moplah rebellion of 1921.⁴⁵ What is significant is that in this transmission by verbal codes or through visual signs, the ideology of class struggle is invariably mediated by religion because Guha believes that the politics of rebellion or tribal insurgencies are almost always expressed in sacred idioms as they are very effective in arousing mass support.⁴⁶

Lastly, 'territoriality' is that aspect or form of peasant/tribal consciousness in which insurgents get bound by blood ties (consanguinity) on the one hand and by local bond (contiguity) on the other. A sense of belongingness to a common lineage and to a shared habitat overlap with one another. Thus, ethnic space and physical space notions are constituents of territoriality. Guha has stressed the fact that even this consciousness has often transcended the limits of ties of either blood or habitat or both. Therefore, the 1857 Mutiny could spread far beyond the heartland of the Doab region as well as Oudh.⁴⁷ In this context Guha has criticised S.C. Roy and many other anthropologists who failed to see through the anti-colonial content of the tribal revolts or peasant movements in India and who thereby have helped to perpetuate the myth that tribal/peasant insurgency was nothing more than a demonstration of ethnic antagonism against the *diku*—(i.e., outsider)⁴⁸ and that peasant movements were nothing but 'disturbances' that created law and order problems for the colonial administration. But, in one sense, the ethnic antagonism—expressed in idioms like '*diku*'—is also a way of redefining 'imperialism' as 'internal colonialism': a point missed completely by Guha.

The common forms or patterns of peasant/tribal insurgents' consciousness are made up not only of elements and tendencies which are mutually consistent but also those which clash and conflict with one another. Guha does not visualise the common form in which the rebels' consciousness manifests as a generality that is external to the subject or that is a *sui generis* phenomenon, nor is it any abstract quality of insurgency discovered by pure abstraction and reflection. Rather, it is what permeates and includes in it everything particular. Hence Guha's framework consists of 'abstracted elementary forms' that are firmly rooted in the concrete foundation of facts drawn from the nineteenth century peasant/tribal insurgencies. Therefore the impact of Durkheim on Guha's analytical framework is more apparent than real. Like formal sociologists (Georg Simmel and others) Guha does not fall into the trap of reification—a standard error in any formal analysis. Instead his sight is fixed on the insurgent Kols, Santals and Birsait movements, it is these rebels' consciousness which Guha has analysed

and it is the deep historical meaning of their insurgencies in colonial India to which his study draws our attention.

The subaltern approach, at least the form in which Guha has demonstrated its use in his own study⁴⁹ of peasant insurgencies, as stated earlier, draws heavily on Emile Durkheim's notion of 'elementary forms', or George Simmel's concept of 'forms' of interaction. In substance, however, the subaltern studies approach as it developed in India clearly represents a synthesis of four major streams within contemporary Marxism: (i) First and the most obvious of these is Gramscian Marxism which emphasises the role of pure spontaneity of the action of subaltern masses in history in general and under a hegemonic State in particular. For theoretical justification, conceptual/analytical tools, and also for abstractions of general explanation, the subaltern approach draws obviously on Gramsci. (ii) No less obvious is the influence of Trotskyite-Marxism—particularly in terms of consciousness (i.e., necessary as opposed to contingent consciousness). Guha's subaltern studies approach treats consciousness the way Trotsky did. For Trotsky, objective theoretical positions reigned supreme and these must be judged objectively, rather than shifting them pragmatically, as the Stalinist politicians often did, by twisting their theoretical pronouncements guided by personal power ambitions or political motivations.⁵⁰ Following Trotsky then, the subaltern approach to history considers the role of party, strategies and tactics as important, no doubt, but not as prior to 'necessary consciousness'. (iii) The third Marxist stream which Guha's own approach draws inspiration from is represented by Eric Hobsbawm, George Rude and E.P. Thompson, who through their studies⁵¹ have shown the indispensability of the material force and actors of history. And finally, (iv) in terms of the directions in which subaltern struggles develop, or the forms in which they manifest, Guha and his associates have clearly tended to model their arguments on the lines indicated by the 1968 Paris Uprising (i.e., the massive student and youth protest that finally brought the downfall of Charles de Gaulle), the Latin American movements—particularly the experience of Che Guevara in Bolivia and the like. It is a blend of these four traditions in contemporary Marxism that Guha's subaltern studies approach to history represents.

The 'subaltern studies' approach earned critics as fast as it gained a following, particularly among young historians from both India and abroad, though not so much among other social scientists. These historians have focussed their attention on peasants, workers and other subaltern elements, in an attempt to show how their protests have been spontaneous and traditional and yet far more radical in their methods of resistance, sometimes even in their goals, than the elite and middle-class dominated nationalist movement in India was. Above all, in conformity with Ranajit Guha's contention, these studies—the results of which are now available in a series of five volumes⁵²—also argue

that such spontaneous movements were independent of the nationalist leadership which often tried to control them if possible, or even to suppress and subvert them whenever necessary⁵³

Critics of the 'subaltern studies' approach have attacked precisely the whole notion of 'autonomy' of the subaltern consciousness. Irfan Habib and many others have questioned the validity of such an attempt to study subaltern groups and their protest movements in isolation from other parallel political processes. A struggle or a protest movement that appears to be autonomous, is in reality preceded by several changes in the consciousness of its principal participants. Such changes often emanate from wider political processes, including the elite politics which the subaltern approach followers have decried. In the Indian context the interface between the national movement led by the Indian National Congress and the grassroots level protests and resistance movements is too significant to be ignored, because the latter was a prime source of ideas for the former⁵⁴

Another major difficulty with the subaltern studies approach pertains to the lack of precise meaning and scope of the concept of 'subalternity' as an analytical category. In a separate note on the term by Guha⁵⁵ he admits that the composition of this category is not homogeneous. The term is more residual in its connotation as it includes practically all non-elite sections of the people. Guha treats the lowest strata of the rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich and upper-middle peasants as all belonging to the category of 'people' or 'subaltern classes'. But then he has left it to individual researchers to investigate, identify and determine the specific nature of subalternity by situating it historically. With this rider it should be possible to consider *adivasis* (tribals), untouchables or *dalits*, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers, as well as other marginalised sections with specific ethnic, non-class characteristics (caste, religion, clan, language or regional identity of a minority group) as 'subaltern classes'. But then by no stretch of imagination can the class outlook and interests of these immiserated and marginalised groups be compatible, let alone identical, with those of the lowest strata of rural gentry, the rich and upper-middle peasantry whom Guha treats as the ideal components of 'subalternity'.

More importantly, the subaltern studies approach to historiography in a way confines itself preferentially to the colonial period, though not all the adherents strictly do so. In addition to this, at least by implication, the approach is applicable only to those mass mobilisations which took on the insurgent character, and hence it is inapplicable to those tribal/peasant or any other protest movements which were not truly insurgent in character. This again, by implication, severely restricts the scope of Gramscian formulations. If, however, members of the 'subaltern studies' group (or maybe school) insist that the concept should be used for studying only the insurgent responses of the people during the colonial period, then the approach

excludes all those ethnic/tribal, peasant, or any other protest movements which are not necessarily insurgent in character but which can be called as 'revolutions of rising expectations'.

If the contents of the 'subaltern studies' series are subjected to a closer scrutiny, then not all contributors have conformed to the definition specified in Guha's initial note. For example, Arvind Das⁵⁶ in his account of the East Champaran Kisan Sabha in Jharkia and the land-grab movement in Bihar in general, has essentially dealt with the agrarian movements of the poor and landless peasants in the 1960s and 1970s. In the context of Masaurhi (1970-75) again it is the struggle of the agricultural labourers of Harijan castes that he has discussed.⁵⁷ There are many other studies on agricultural labourers' or jute-workers' struggles which, strictly speaking, do not fit into the rigid definitional ambit of 'subaltern classes' as drawn by Guha. Another example is David Hardiman's study⁵⁸ on the Devi movement among the tribals of Gujarat, which too does not fit into the 'subaltern studies' strait-jacket.

Even if we accept 'subalternity' as a generic conceptual category, which is to be defined and situated historically (which would theoretically make it an open category to include practically any class or stratum of a society), still other ambiguities remain. The most important one relates to the proximity of this concept to 'insurgencies'. Some of the studies in the subaltern series have of course dealt with movements—protests/mobilisations—which are not insurgent in character. Since neither in its scope of applicability nor in terms of the basic properties of 'subaltern' behaviour the concept of 'subalternity' suggests any specific boundaries, its status as a scientific concept remains rather doubtful.

In our opinion, more useful than the concept of 'subalternity' is Ranajit Guha's framework consisting of six forms or aspects of insurgents' consciousness for all those interested in studying social movements in general, and ethnic/tribal and peasant movements in particular. The value of Guha's paradigmatic forms remains undiminished regardless of whether we accept or eliminate the 'subaltern' concept from his framework. The only limitation of Guha's paradigm lies in its restricted applicability or suitability for studying only those movements which took on an insurgent character, because his 'elementary aspects' spell out precisely the basic properties of the insurgent's action. A large number of ethnic/tribal movements, or more recent farmers' movements in India, that have gathered momentum since the phase of planned rural development through modernisation of agriculture was inaugurated in India from the 1950s, are left out because they did not develop necessarily along the insurgent syndrome.

The identity formations of ethnic/tribal groups, peasantry, or even among minorities and their political expressions in contemporary India present a wide spectrum. They range from the nativist movements like the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra (which is militant but not radical),⁵⁹ or movements for assertion of regional/sub-regional identities such as for

a separate Vidarbha⁶⁰ or Telengana⁶¹ state on the one hand, to the Jharkhand movement in the Chotanagpur districts of Bihar,⁶² and many other 'sons of the soil' movements⁶³ which have sometimes taken on insurgent, militant or even terrorist forms, but have most of the time sought to pursue their demands within the constitutional framework of India and by accepting its legitimacy as well as the liberal democratic means. Some of these movements, or at least a fraction of them, have raised secessionist demands questioning the very legitimacy of India as a nation-state. However, most of these contemporary movements come fairly close to what T. D. Tella has called 'the revolutions of rising expectations' which are often unleashed by developmental imbalances resulting from the modernisation process in the third world. The most striking example of this is the farmers' movements that have gathered momentum in different parts of India since the mid-seventies to demand remunerative prices for farm produce. Ideologues of these movements argue that while agricultural productivity has risen phenomenally as a result of the Green Revolution—and its subsidised inputs—agricultural profitability has declined sharply due to non-remunerative prices. The Bharatiya Kisan Union movement in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, the Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra, or the Rajya Rayatha Sangh in Karnataka and the like belong essentially to this category of protest movements. Ernesto Laclau⁶⁴ has tried to develop a proper framework for studying such movements, which he characterises as 'populist movements'. In our view we in India ought to examine Laclau's attempt to theorise on 'populism' more seriously, since it is directly relevant for understanding the complex phenomena of contemporary movements—whether farmers', ethnic, tribal or regional.

INTERPRETATIONS OF POPULISM

Laclau has mentioned four basic approaches to an interpretation of populism. For the first approach, populism is a typical expression of a determinate social class and hence it is both a movement and an ideology at the same time. For example, the Russian Narodnik populism in the nineteenth century was no more than a peasant ideology, the North American populism in 1895 was an ideology and mobilisation typical of a society of small farmers opposed to urban life and big business, and the more recent Latin American mobilisation of urban masses is an ideological-political expression of a petty bourgeoisie or of marginal sectors.⁶⁵ In this approach a type of populism is established by its class base or class combination.

The second conception of populism treats it with a theoretical nihilism, as if the concept is devoid of any content. For example, Peter Worsley⁶⁶ argues that it is difficult to specify common crucial attributes that are present in all movements that are usually characterised as 'populist'. Hence, populism is not an analytical category but a datum of experience.⁶⁷ But despite its conceptual

imprecision or indefiniteness, populism has gained more and more respectability in the social sciences

According to the third approach, the difficulties in the term could be overcome by restricting it to characterisation of ideology only, and not of a movement. As an ideology the main properties of 'populism' are. (i) its ingrained hostility to the *status quo*; (ii) mistrust of traditional politicians, (iii) appeal to the people or masses and not to specific classes as such; and finally, (iv) its anti-intellectualism.⁶⁸ Such a peculiar ideological nexus gets formed and adopted by social movements that differ widely in their social origins as well as in their aspirations. Though useful, this approach helps only in studying or describing the 'form' but not the content of social movements, because a simple characterisation of populist elements or behavioural forms would say nothing of the role such a movement plays in a determinate social formation in a spatio-temporal context.⁶⁹

The fourth conception of populism is derived from functionalist theory. Its argument, to put it in its simplest form, would run as follows: when aspirations, guided by culturally defined goals, are kept constantly rising, but are not matched by adequate institutional means to fulfil them, such a situation creates different forms of adaptation on the part of individuals to the social structure. All forms of adaptation other than 'conformist' behaviour are considered in the functionalist paradigm as 'deviations' or aberrations.⁷⁰ Populism in this functionalist perspective would be seen as an aberrant phenomenon produced by 'the asynchronism of the processes of transition from a traditional to an industrial society'.⁷¹

Drawing from the comparative assessments of the European and Latin American experience G. Germani has formulated a theory of populism.⁷² Germani also treats populism as a product of a transitional stage between traditional and industrial societies in which features of advanced stages correspond to a backward stage. This constitutes 'asynchronism'. Coexistence of these two would mean that modernisation in one will provoke change in the others, but not necessarily in a modern direction. Populism combines these two opposite tendencies in two forms—the demonstration effect and the fusion effect. The former refers to widespread diffusion of habits, mentalities and styles that correspond to a more advanced stage in backward areas. In the latter form (i.e., the fusion effect), ideologies and attitudes corresponding to the advanced stage are reinterpreted in a backward context, which in turn reinforce the traditional features. Populism therefore seeks to achieve mobilisation and integration, change and status quo at the same time.⁷³ In other words, populist movements are anti-status quoist and status quoist at the same time. And this blend of change as well as stability orientations, when pursued simultaneously through ideology, constitutes 'populism'.

Another Latin American scholar, Torcuato Di Tella has defined 'populism' as a political movement which enjoys the support of the

masses of the urban working class and/or peasantry, but which does not result from the autonomous organisational power of either of these two sectors. It is also supported by non-working class or non-peasant sections upholding an anti-status quo ideology. Hence, to Di Tella, social classes are present in populism but not necessarily as classes. A peculiar ideology achieves the separation of the class nature of participants and their forms of political expression, which in our view is truly happening in the phenomenal growth of farmers' movements all over India in more recent years. Populism in this sense is the 'revolution of rising expectations' responsible for the asynchronism.⁷⁴ Hence, three essential features of populism are stressed by Di Tella: (i) an elite committed to mobilisation of masses appears on the scene—an elite that is imbued with an anti-status quo ideology; (ii) mass mobilization generated by rising expectations; and (iii) an ideology with a widespread appeal. What is, however, important is that the roots of these three features are sought in the transition or 'asynchronism'.⁷⁵

In the ultimate analysis, although classes appear in populist movements but not as classes, the meaning of the ideological elements identified with populism has to be sought in the social structure. And these structures refer back again to the class nature of populist movements. Di Tella's formulations thus suggest that to a higher degree of development would correspond more of a 'class' and less of a 'populist' organisation. This amounts to saying that populist experiences or movements are likely to be less frequent in capitalist societies than in peripheral countries due to different levels of development. Laclau has, however, contested this point since 'developed-underdeveloped', 'traditional-modern' or 'agrarian-industrial' dichotomies are used by Di Tella as prior paradigms for defining 'populism'.⁷⁶

The confusion over the concept of 'populism' is largely due to two opposing tendencies among analysts of such movements or populist phenomena: (i) either to specify the class nature of specific populist movements, and then to treat class contradictions as the fundamental structural moment for discerning political and ideological features; or (ii) to differentiate between class determination of superstructures and the form of existence of classes at the level of these superstructures. Orthodox Marxism theorises superstructures as reflections of production, and makes class consciousness the basic constitutive movement of class. Gramsci, and following him Laclau, abandon this reductionist way of defining classes as antagonistic poles of production relations. They argue that: (i) classes exist at the ideological and political level in a process of articulation and not of reduction; (ii) that articulation requires non-class contents—interpellations and contradictions which constitute the raw material on which class ideological practices operate. Thus, the ideology of the dominant class, precisely because it is dominant, interpellates not just the members of that class but also members of the dominated classes, and thereby their

potential antagonism is neutralised; (iii) the levels of political and ideological superstructures must be conceived in the form of articulation and not of reduction; (iv) therefore, populist discourse refers primarily to 'people' or masses, though class as historical agent of the people's interests is very much present there; (v) and finally, people/power bloc contradictions are distinct from a class contradiction. Populist movements express primarily the former,⁷⁷ and they arise in a specific ideological domain. The dialectical tension between the 'people' and 'classes' determines the form of ideology.⁷⁸ The Gramscian impact on Laclau's theoretical formulations on 'populism' is too evident to need any further elaboration of his analytical framework.

THE POTENTIAL

Having looked at the 'subaltern studies' approach and 'populism' as a conceptual tool it is necessary to assess their potential as useful frameworks for studying social movements—including ethnic/tribal, and peasant movements in India. To us, heuristically more significant than the concept of 'subalternity' in the alternative approach to historiography advocated by Ranajit Guha, are the six paradigmatic forms (suggested by him) in which insurgent consciousness manifests. For studying protest movements of peasantry and ethnic/tribal groups in general, and their insurgencies in particular, Guha's forms are invaluable; they suggest what questions a researcher ought to ask while studying any insurgent phenomenon, and how to interpret and interconnect seemingly disparate sets of data in order to reconstruct the nature of consciousness of the insurgent people whom one has chosen to study. This framework consisting of Guha's six paradigmatic forms, could be usefully employed in studying ethnic/tribal and peasant movements, but mainly of the insurgent variety, without making much ado of the concept of 'subalternity' *per se*. It is not being suggested here that the concept ought to be discarded outright. However, its extensive usage in specific historical contexts inquired into by the contributors to the *Subaltern Studies* series has not in any way minimised either the extent of ambiguities it is ridden with or the polemics associated with it. On the contrary, it has become increasingly difficult to use the term 'subalternity' with conceptual precision or a common meaning structure as the body of research literature on subaltern issues keeps growing.

Guha's paradigmatic forms too, though useful, have some obvious limitations. They are useful for studying insurgent movements only. Naturally, non-insurgent protest movements would remain outside the pale of his paradigm. Moreover, these forms in themselves are not fixed or determinate, and would require continuous renewal in the light of fresh research material; finally these forms in themselves do not constitute an explanation as to why a given movement or insurgency assumes certain of these forms and not others.

It is here that the concept of 'populism', and the framework that Laclau and other Latin American scholars have suggested for studying

'populist movements', could possibly provide us with directions for inquiries into contemporary peasant/farmers' movements, ethnic/tribal movements, or movements for assertion of regional, ethnic or minority identities, which are becoming less and less insurgent in character and are acquiring the form of 'populism'—i.e., 'revolution of rising expectations'. In these movements 'people' or masses and not 'classes' seem to be getting united against the status quo establishment, and such a unity or solidarity is apparently achieved through ideology despite the presence of one or more dominant classes operating within such populist formations.

The precise linkages between masses and classes, the nature of populist ideologies and the type of inter-class unity these ideological interpellations achieve, and the role such populist movements play in a determinate social formation or in a given mode of production, are some of the issues that could be taken up for inquiry in the context of contemporary social movements—more particularly peasant/farmers' movements or ethnic movements in India. Guha's framework of the six forms of rebel's consciousness, and Laclau's formulations on 'populism', which have regrettably remained neglected in the mainstream sociology and social anthropology of movements in India, could provide us with some directions for future enquiry.

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34 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

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K.S SINGH*

Tribal Peasantry, Millenarianism, Anarchism and Nationalism: A Case Study of the Tanabhagats in Chotanagpur, 1914-25

This paper discusses the evolution of a peasant movement in three phases from the millenarian to the agrarian and the political, and the rise of peasant consciousness among a group of tribal people in Chotanagpur. The process of transformation of tribes, i.e., primitive communities, now scheduled as such under the Constitution of India, into a class of peasantry in the colonial period, has been well researched,¹ particularly in relation to the Mundas and Santals, two major tribal communities in Chotanagpur. While imbibing the socio-cultural traits of the peasantry, the tribals revolted against colonial modes of exploitation. The Munda leaders called Sardars, for example, led a constitutional agitation (1858-1894) to regain the land they had lost to the aliens brought in by the colonial administration before 1858. This led to an armed insurrection (1894-1901) under Birsa Munda.²

This sequence of developments repeated itself among the Oraons, the most numerous tribal-peasant community in Chotanagpur. Both the Oraons and the Mundas had participated in the *mulku larai*, i.e., the struggle for land, but parted company in the 1880s. However, the core of shared agrarian ideas survived among the Oraons, and was developed by the Tanabhagats from 1915 onwards. Having initially launched a reform movement, the Tanabhagats turned violent in 1918 and joined the freedom struggle in 1921. It is strange that the agrarian component of the Tanabhagat movement is relatively little known compared to its socio-religious and political dimensions.³

Like the Mundas, the Oraons were exposed to the medieval *bhakti* movements. A number of *bhakti* or *bhagat* sects came into existence among them. There were Bachchidan *bhagats* who took their vow by touching a calf's tail or by presenting cows to Brahmuns; they also made offerings to the Hindu deities, Devi or Durga, but they were not yet puritanical enough to give up the use of jewellery and bordered clothes.⁴ Next only to such traditions of Hindu influence, was the immediate impression on the Oraons⁵ created by Birsa Munda and his movement. Birsa was the 'god' (*bhagwan*) of Chotanagpur and not only

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of the Mundas, who had greatly influenced the Oraons, a bulk of whom, living in regions up to Barwari and Chechari in Palamau, had become convinced Birsaites. Birsa himself once visited Lohardaga, located in the heart of Oraon country. The Munda Tanabhagats of Karra were the disciples of Debo and Mangra Munda of Jurdag. A section of the Birsaites of Thursday School pass themselves off as Tanabhagats, and they share, along with the Oraon Tanabhagats, the same gamut of beliefs, which testify to their mutual influence. They wear the sacred thread, do not take meat or work on Thursday which was Birsa's birthday, and their prayers and the mode of rendering them are similar. With their hands folded in prayer, they go round chanting in a monotonous tone the *mantras* naming the superior powers (sun, moon, etc.) or any substitutes for those powers they could conceive of, such as Birsa (Birsa Bhagwan). They believe that Birsa had earlier revealed the Tana religion:

O Birsa Bhagwan, you revealed Tana religion
 O Father of Chota Nagpur, you revealed the religion
 O Father, you founded the religion for life ⁶

Subsequently, the followers of the Thursday School were influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and the political ideas of the freedom struggle to which we will revert later.

TANABHAGAT MOVEMENT

Origins

Like all millenarian movements the Tanabhagat movement had its origin in a revelation received by an Oraon. On April 21, 1914, an Oraon youth of 20 to 25 years of age, Jatra Oraon,⁷ proclaimed that he had received the divine message from Dharmesh, the Supreme God of the Oraons, in a dream, together with the divine powers and supernatural gifts necessary for the restoration of the Oraon *raj*. He would be a *raja* and his followers would share his kingdom and be *rajas* too.⁸ He had also been entrusted with the mission to teach incantations (*mantras*) and to pull out (*tana*) ghosts and spirits whose worship degraded his people and thus to purify and reform their lives so that they could be equal to the Christians and Hindus in social status. Equality with the higher strata and a share in the regional power structure, which was rudely ended by the colonial administration, was thus a long-term objective of the movement. Monotheism, vegetarianism and teetotalism were the key elements in the new religion. Jatra was the new god, and none was to be obeyed except him and his disciples. As the movement progressed, agrarian issues came to the fore. Ghost-hunting gave way to a no-rent payment campaign. The protest against *zamindars* or landlords took on an atavistic form. Oraons would not plough or do work of any kind, for either the Government or the *zamindars*, whose servants were beaten up and turned out of the jungles where they went to cut wood. The movement with its exclusiveness and its anti-alien

overtone caused a certain amount of panic amongst the local *zamindars* and non-tribal tenants. In an assessment of the developing situation towards the end of April 1920 the authorities stated:

It is very important that this Tanabhagat movement should be stamped out. The Superintendent of Police of today has received a report which indicates that the movement is spreading. . . Unless the followers are made to realize that their so-called leaders are not *Bhagwans* (gods) and incapable of being punished, I fear a serious spread of the movement.⁹

They of course took preventive action to maintain law and order. Jatra was arrested on April 23, 1914, on the charge of carrying on propaganda that endangered peace, and sentenced to imprisonment. On his release on June 2, 1915, he was heartily welcomed by his followers, but he would not burn his fingers again and faded out. A succession of 'gurus' followed. A woman, Litho Oraon, declared herself a goddess and preached along the same lines as Jatra did. The Tanabhagat movement spread like wildfire among the Oraon population of Ranchi, Palamau (Chandwa) and Hazaribagh. Some Mundas and Kharias also joined hands, but the movement remained predominantly Oraon in its social composition. Litho Oraon too was charged, like Jatra, with being a lunatic, but was, like him, found fit enough to stand trial. On her release she too faded into oblivion. In November 1915, Mangor Oraon proclaimed himself a god and suffered the same fate. The movement slumbered until March 1919 when it showed unusual maturity under the leadership of Sibu Oraon and Maya Oraon.

Sibu, a boy of 20 years, solemnly declared in 1919 that he was destined to become the leader of the Oraons, that the *raj* would shortly return to the Oraon and that a great change in the order of things would take place after the Holi festival. In this new order, *zamindars*, traders, government and the Christians would have no place.

It is no longer the *raj* of the *zamindars*. The earth belongs to the pious men. Nobody should give any rent or chowkidari tax.

The *banias* (traders) must not attend bazars. They rob the men. Maruaries, may your cloth be burnt to ashes; Musalmans, may you perish. The vagabonds and the prostitutes will perish.

Brahmans, Rajputs, *rajas* and *zamindars* had nothing to eat when they came here but now they have become so powerful as to beat the Oraons and Mundas.

Christians are the lowest class. God says so.¹⁰

Change in Precepts

Collecting about 700 to 800 followers, the leaders proceeded to Satpahari (Chandwa) where they expected the advent of a deity, a saviour. They practised austerities for a month until their provisions ran out. Sibu, the leader, came down to Hesalong (Burma), killed a

heifer, dressed the meat and cooked it. He made seven cuts with a knife on the calf in its left leg and took out some blood which he mixed with the beef. This was eaten by him and his followers. Then they went to a liquor shop where they partook of the wine and food cooked by a Muslim. Sibū solemnly declared that the Tanas were no longer to observe the restrictions on food, drink and conduct, and that they were to enjoy all kinds of carnal pleasures and all kinds of food (*sorho singar battiso ahar*). Their seven years' vow of abstinence (*sat sattiya*) had ended, they were free to enjoy life as they chose. They were no longer *Kols*, but brothers to the Hindus and Muslims and equal to them.

These were signs of a climbdown, which is not unusual in a millenarian movement. Their 'anarchic' stand on the agrarian question however remained unchanged. God had distinctly instructed, claimed Sibū, that they should no longer cultivate fields. This made the local authorities sit up and bind down the Tana leaders to prevent any breach of the peace.¹¹ Sibū and Maya were arrested at Murma on March 1. There was not enough evidence to warrant their punishment under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code. The movement led by Sibū fizzled out by the end of the year.

Return to Puritanism

Subsequently, the Tanabhat movement regained its puritanical character, and became more Hinduised as it imbibed the influences of the dominant religion in the neighborhood. The new religion was even institutionalised. Religious texts, which bore resemblance to the Christian scriptures, were composed.¹² The code of ethics became stringent. The Tanabhat would not touch liquor, sell old cows and bullocks, and eat pig's flesh or fish. He would not commit murder or theft, or tell a lie. A norm of ceremonial cleanliness was enjoined. There would be no bedecking of a person with jewellery, no wearing of coloured or bordered cloth. Monogamy was the rule. Bride's price was regulated. Thursday became a day of rest. Social cohesion was sought to be promoted by stressing the obligation of mutual help, which was a religious duty. The *mandi* or the *bhat* congregation, like the Christian institution, would settle disputes. Excommunication was the penalty for not abiding by the injunction.

There were anarchists among the Tanabhagats who broke the plough and gave up cultivation of land. This, though done ostensibly in deference to the cattle (*lachmi*) which would not be made to work, was in actuality a silent protest against the landlords. They refused to pay rent and taxes. Cattle were let loose and stores of rice thrown away. But this phase did not last long. A reaction set in and the extremists relapsed into their old habits of drinking and flesh-eating.¹³ The moderates with their puritanism prevailed and even today constitute the core of the Tanabhat community.

Like most millennial movements, the Tanabhat movement led up to an uprising. Beneath the placid surface currents ran deep. The

Tanabhagats had been able to create a state of excitement among the entire population, both tribal and non-tribal, and bring the agrarian issue to the fore. Another factor which made for instability and ferment was the removal, through deportation, of German missionaries who had exercised a restraining influence on the Oraons at the beginning of the first World War. This was the background to the *bhagat* uprising, a short-lived affair, on the plateau of the Jamira Pat which lay across the border of Surguja State (Madhya Pradesh) and Palamau (Bihar).¹⁴ The Oraons and Kisans (Najesia) preponderated in this sparsely populated region. The Tanabhagat movement came to this region in 1915. Meetings were held in villages. People gave up drinking alcohol; domestic birds and animals were turned out of houses and killed in large numbers because they harboured evils. The tribals also gave up tilling lands. When the authorities took action, the movement went underground and was kept alive through a series of nocturnal meetings and a system of communication. By March 1918, the message of revolution, scribbled on *sal* leaves, began to circulate from village to village, as during the tribal insurrections in the past. There was, however, no immediate 'provocation' for an uprising in a sparsely populated tribal region. There were no agrarian issues. There were no doubt the *bania* money-lenders and the *gaontias* (village headmen), the traditional exploiters of the tribals, who harassed the simple *kisan* and demanded exorbitant rates of interests on money and grain loans. There were also the cattle-breeders, *Ahirs*, who flourished on the plateaus, and trespassed on tribal land. The subordinate officials of the feudatory state of Surguja, who were responsible for the administration of the tribes, allowed the *Ahirs* and *gaontias* to put down the *Kusharis*, the tribal people.

Role of German Missionaries

The local authorities suspected the Lutheran converts who called themselves 'German' and the German missionaries for having attempted to undermine the tribals' loyalty to the British *raj*, particularly among the converted people whom the missionaries regarded as members of their flock.

No one but a German would have instilled into the minds of the people fantastic ideas of the might and power of the German nation, which was undoubtedly done among the Surguja Kishan-Oraons. . The only Germans who were in a position to do so were the Lutheran missionaries, of whom a large number were working. . . up to some time after the commencement of the war. Reference to the Germans, the 'German Baba' and the 'German *Larai*' was frequently made. . . At least one man who has joined the rebels. . . told that he went to take part in the German *Larai*.¹⁵

Evidently the tribal rebels were encouraged by the reported feat of the German army earlier in the Great War and by the expectation that

they would help the tribals once they took up arms. A Catholic missionary testified that the Lutheran missionaries assisted in the development of the movement. The political agent was convinced that the Lutheran missionaries 'did preach German propaganda and did incite the people against the British *raj*', and that the rebels imported into their territory developed German propaganda originally spread by missionaries residing in British India. The feudatory chief of Surguja also blamed the 'poison of the ideas', by 'some vile and meanhearted treacherous missionaries.'¹⁶ But it seems unlikely that the British authorities would have indulged in any propaganda against the *raj* just after the outbreak of the war. It is, however, quite likely that some of them might have inadvertently put wild ideas about the German might into the heads of their tribal converts.

The Leaders and the Movement

The *bhagat* leaders of the movement made a curious team. There were the tribal Kishan leaders; Labour (Surguja), Bhaira (Palamau), Khikbir, Bikram, Rupa Baiga, Sudhua (Jashpur), Sombe (Sriwet). There were two money-lenders (*bantias*) too, Bigu Sao and Belas Sao, who had settled down among the tribes for two generations; the first happened to be the village headman (*gaontia*). It is difficult to explain the involvement of two influential *bantias* in the tribal movement, except on the ground that they had become deeply involved in the Tana movement. These leaders under a 'state of perturbed delirium' would proclaim possession of supernatural powers, conferred by 'providential mercy'. There were new 'political' ideas in the air.

They (the leaders) used to say that very shortly a great insurrection was to occur—the Germans would reign in this part—the present Maharaja of the State was not destined to rule—the Raj would be theirs—Bigu Sao (?) would become the King of Tappa Mundwa and Labour Kishan of Tappa Madgari—they were to fight with the present Maharaja, whose arms would become quite ineffective—the bullets would melt into water in the barrels—the swords would twist in the hands of the soldiers—all the non-*kisan* and non-Oraon classes such as Chhatris, Brahmuns, Muhammadans would be killed—men of other castes, who are bonafide residents of the state, such as Dajwars, Kheirwars, Chausis, Korwas, Kodakus, and Barghas, etc., who would join them, might be spared—no females would be touched—but males of other castes, even a child in the cradle, would be killed—the Germans would send their arms from heaven from *udan khatola* (air-ship)—the battle was not between men and men but gods and men (the Germans representing gods)—the rebels would regain their lives if at all killed in battle, and so on.¹⁷

In this battle of extermination *bantias* were mercifully spared out of deference to Bigu Sao who made the tribals' cause his own. Or was it just opportunism? Labour claimed possession of a wonderful weapon

that could kill enemies from a distance of ten miles. Khikhur, a coolie in a tea garden claimed to have visited Germany where he received orders to carry on the battle on Jamrapath. Both Bigu Sao and Labour set themselves up as *rajas*, held courts and divided the territory (*tappas*) among themselves.

On April 16, the call for the rebellion went out. The rebels established their camp on the Panch Cahari (the five hills). On April 21, they started looting villages and murdering the aliens; the first victims belonged to the Ahir and Kahar castes. The rebels' ranks swelled as they achieved success on April 25. A large number of rebels 'making horrible war cries, displaying their weapons, dancing wildly and stumbling fanatically' raided the camp of the state's magistrate at Jalgali. The magistrate, Pandit Gopal Rao, tried to pacify the crowd and then escaped on an elephant of all things. The rebels pursued the fleeing symbols of the *raj*, shot arrows at the elephant, which ran amuck and shook off the raiders. The raiders were mercilessly slain. The rebels captured a gun and cartridges. The first round of the battle was won. The bullets had turned into water. The efficacy of the Tana *mantra* had been proved.

The murder of state functionaries sent shivers through the wild tract. Villages were deserted. The 'aliens' and *sahebs* fled. Those who remained in villages were savagely killed with characteristic tribal vengeance. Between April 21 and May 4, 1918, the rebels looted fourteen villages and killed fifty-one non-tribals. Blacksmiths were spared but were forced to manufacture weapons. Gopahatu became the capital and the rebels' flag went up the mast. The entire region was in a state of panic. In the moneylenders' village of Mahuadaur (Palamau) at the foot of the hills,

the wildest news (of the *bhagats* coming down from the plateau) flies about the country. . . People are flying in every direction. The zamindars set the example. Chatta Sair (moneylender) with his family is off to Barway. Others are fleeing to the east. The *bhagats* of the Chechari (valley) have gone to join those of Surguja.¹⁸

The rebels moved to the headquarters of the Maharaja at Ambikapur, miles away. On May 2, the state authorities launched a counter-attack on the 3,000-strong contingent of rebels at Kusumi, a small township at the foot of the hills, from two directions. The *tahsildar's* men engaged the advancing rebels, and fired a few shots. The rebels were halted. But the other party moved forward letting out 'tremendous wild cries, dancing madly, displaying their warplay with their arms', sending down volleys of arrows. They shouted 'victory to Germans'. The *tahsildar's* men opened fire. The rebels retreated leaving a few dead in the field and carrying away some wounded with them; the bullets did not turn into water.

On May 2, the state forces, about 100 armed men, led by the political agent, launched a full-scale offensive. They scaled the Kondpari Ghat,

about 2,000 feet high, and engaged the rebels. The officials' report gives a graphic description of the encounter:

Suddenly we heard cries of men hidden behind the ravines and bushes on the height on the western side. We stopped. Our attention was anxiously diverted in that direction. We found lot of men wildly crying and showing their arms to us. We understood the enemy had taken us by surprise. We opened fire on them. To our surprise we found volleys of arrows coming on us from our back side, i.e. from the height in the east. One of the reserve constables was hit in the foot by an arrow and was wounded and another had his turban knocked off. The '*badmashes*' were also pelting stones which were falling near us. We fired right and left and a few of my men climbed the hill in the eastern side. In about a quarter of an hour everything was silent. The rebels from both sides fled away, pursued by few of my men. They, I presume, were not more than 200. In a few minutes they were on the plains on the Jamirapat and could still see the rebels dispersing disorderly. The number of deaths on the western height we ascertained were ten and from the blood-marks on the road we understood that there were many wounded.¹⁹

The backbone of the rebels was broken, but still a few skirmishes occurred. In one of them one rebel was killed and three women drowned in Budhanala. The rebels' headquarters, Gopahatu, was dismantled, a rebel leader who claimed possession of the mysterious weapon was killed. The two *bania* leaders were arrested and sentenced to death. In the last engagement, about 200 tribal rebels were arrested. Those who did not take any leading part were let off; those who did were sentenced to corporal punishment of 10 to 20 strokes. The leaders were awarded severe punishment. All was over by May 27. The rising was described as 'a grave enough affair which threatened to engulf the adjoining tracts of Palamau, Ranchi and Jashpur in a very serious rising'. In Jashpur, about 500 Kisans and Oraons stood by to join the rebels.²⁰

The only other instance when the Tanabhagats were not peaceable enough occurred on June 17, 1922. A group of them had a minor, unpremeditated scuffle with the police at Sisai (Ranchi).

THE AGRARIAN QUESTION AND ANARCHISM

As the militant aspects of the Tanabhagat movement waned and its reformative aspects were stabilized, its underlying agrarian content came to the surface. The process was hastened under the influence of the Freedom Movement and Mahatma Gandhi after 1921, which we turn to later.

The Oraons like the Mundas were suffering from a deep sense of agrarian grievance, and they saw in the Freedom Movement an opportunity for the recovery of their lands long lost to the aliens (*dikus*), and for the expulsion of the middlemen who oppressed them.

Though the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908) gave protection against alienation of tribal land, many agrarian issues had remained unresolved, which proved to be irritants in the years that followed the enactment. The *zamindars* were bent upon extending their own (*khas*) cultivation by converting tribal *raiya*s' lands into personal possession (*bakasht*). They also deprived the leaders of the village communities such as the Mahtos, Mundas and Pahans of their right to make settlements of abandoned and surrendered holdings of village waste lands by either taking these lands under their own cultivation or by settling them with non-aboriginal *raiya*s for a heavy sum of money or *salami*. The jungle rights of the *raiya*s were also eroded by the landlords' action in settling lands in forests with non-tribals on the fatuous plea that the tribal *raiya*s themselves destroyed village jungles.²¹ The settlement operations had already recognized the *zamindar*'s proprietary rights in the jungles, which curtailed the *raiya*s' recorded right of taking wood for fuel and house-building and agricultural purposes. The law did not prevent the sale of the tribals' privileged land in execution of decrees for arrears of rent. The landlords' right to resume the lands of heirless or absconding tribals proved galling. The main grievance of the tribals, i.e., non-restoration of lands of which they had been wrongfully dispossessed in 1869, was voiced during the Revisional Settlement in the 1930s and remained unremedied. What was worse, all waste lands were unjustly recorded as belonging to the landlords. The antagonism between the *raiya*s and *zamindars* was deep, and the idea that tribals were the original owners of the soil was still deeply rooted in their hearts.²²

The ideas which crystallized through the meetings held over the Oraons lands bore the unmistakable stamp of the Munda Sardars' thinking in the nineteenth century. In the words of the Tana leaders:

Only the Mundas and Oraons had cleared the primeval jungles of the country and prepared lands with great difficulty and at the cost of many lives through wild beasts. Then came the Hindus from other countries, and without any right ousted us from some of the lands and began to take rent from some other land. At that time, however, the rent consisted of some *barnis* (broom-sticks), *sup*s (winnow-bouquets), *sikas* (carrying ropes) etc. for each village, but this was gradually converted into cash payment of 4 *annas* to Rs 12 per village. These rights again have been gradually enhanced without any right or justice. Our shoulders now bleed. All fields and jungles from which the Mundas have been dispossessed by courts and officers or otherwise, through our ignorance, should be restored to us.

All lands now called *rajhas* should be considered to be our *korkar* as our ancestors really prepared them. Rents for these so-called *rajhas* lands should be fixed at half the present rates (as in the case of admitted *korkar* lands). All *bhuinhari* lands should be declared rent-free, as our ancestors prepared these lands when they

established the villages. Why should the *jagirdars* and *thiccadars* who secured grants of villages from the Maharaja, enjoy *majhihas* lands which neither they nor their ancestors prepared?

They should be saved from the manifold oppressions of the zamindars (the middlemen under the Maharaja), and placed directly under Government or, at any rate, under the Maharaja of Chotanagpur.

Some means should be devised by Government to restore to the aboriginal tenants their lands got in auction in execution of rent-decrees or money-decrees. All decrees should be made payable in instalments.

Our ancestors told us that there was no one between ourselves and the Nagbanse Raja, who was accepted as our overlord. But now we see others (middlemen) in between. We all chafe and fret under this oppression but care not to speak. Now only a few payments of our old *khuntkatti* and *bhuinhari* lands are left. whereas interloper middlemen enjoy the best lands that our ancestors prepared. But the Nagbanse Raja and the Mundas are thus kept aside (ignored).²³

So deep was the Tanabhagats' attachment to the land that their ancestors had lost before and even after 1869, that their continuing demand for restoration of land was described by the authorities as impracticable, even fantastic. The Tanas were described as amenable neither to reason nor to common sense; there was no constructive leadership to help and guide them. They failed to understand how the settlement records could be final and how their lands could be taken away:

If any man purchased a mat he would roll it up and take it away to his house, how could a purchaser purchase the land unless he could roll up the land and remove it.²⁴

Applying the same line of argument against the landlords and the Government who were no longer entitled to payment of rent or taxes, they declared

They would pay rent to *zamindars* if the latter would undertake to send down rains regularly in their fields. The police and *chowkidars* were their servants and since they did not behave well but oppressed their masters, they were not going to have any servants and pay their wages.²⁵

Varied Response

The three wings of the Tanabhagats reacted differently to the agrarian question. The moderate wing (*harjota*) comprising the cultivating Tanabhagats owned land but refused to pay rent to landlords and the *chowkidari* tax to the Government. The landlords were contemptuously described as ordinary interlopers (*kattas* or *dhurus*) who had no business to stay in the villages and occupy the

tribals' land that their ancestors had reclaimed and made cultivable. Tribals' ploughs, spades and axes were their title deeds (*pattas*). The extremists (*Bina-Harjota*), the non-cultivating Tanabhagats, described as a desperate set of people, were fanatically irreconciled to the presence of *zamindars*. They protested against the landlords who encroached upon *raiya* lands and increased the area of their *bakasht* lands. They would perform no labour and did not work and yet expected the landlords to feed them, because they had already enriched themselves at the expense of Munda and Oraon *raiya*s. Through their studied non-cooperation they allowed the *zamindars* to cultivate all the lands in their village including their own on payment of half produce to *raiya*s.

The third group consisted of those who linked up the Sardar *larai* with the Tanabhagat movement in the hope that they would get back their *lekhi raj* or rent-free ancestral lands; one of them gave a poetical expression to their innermost urge as follows 'Pray to God (*Baba*) or Father to make Chotanagpur a prosperous land, to make lands rent-free and deliver possession of such lands quickly, and to scatter the *zamindars* to the winds.'²⁶

Like their forebearers the Munda Sardars, the Tanabhagat leaders passed off copies of petitions and memorials submitted to the authorities since 1907 as title-deeds for rent-free lands. As in the past, these fake documents were obtained at exorbitant prices ranging as high as Rs 600 per copy. The simple and unsuspecting *bhagats* were again victims of a gigantic swindle perpetrated by some of their own leaders and described in official records as swindlers and landless men, who held out false hopes about the *sarkar* issuing decrees and ordering planting of flag staff in token of the delivery of possession (*danabandhi*). The Ranchi pleaders earned not less than Rs. 30,000 with the new spurt of the 'Sardar movement' among the Tanabhagats by manufacturing documents couched in Sardar idioms on behalf of simple tribal people struggling for the restoration of their rights as descendants of original reclaimers who had brought land under regular cultivation and lived in a state of 'primitive contentment'.

GANDHI AND THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

The Freedom Movement, when it arrived in the tribal region in 1921, started working upon the then existing corpus of agrarian ideas. The Congress workers, all non-tribals,²⁷ reminded the tribal people that they were the original *rajas* of the country, who had become coolies. If they gave up drinking liquor and using foreign cloth they would become *rajas* again: 'By giving up European things you people will keep 90 crores of rupees in the country and you will at once become *rajas*. When all that happens the Government will go of its own accord.'²⁸

If people abstained from drinking alcohol and killing cows, if they plied the spinning wheel and introduced the panchayat system for settling disputes, they would attain *swaraj* and get rid of the white

people. The Gandhi *raj* would usher in the tribal millennium. A few of the social workers even went about the Munda country telling the tribals that Gandhi was none other than Birsa Bhagwan risen from the dead. Gandhi was a god or demi-god, who was going to drive and establish a *dharam raj* (the kingdom of righteousness). Possessed of supernatural powers, he could walk through fire and water unharmed; walls could not imprison him. The Mahatma had even saved a child by throwing it into a cauldron of boiling water. *Swaraj* meant not only the expulsion of the English but also the aliens (*dikus* to the Mundas and *khatta khurus* to the Oraons) from their land. Christian tribals had already got *swaraj* from the British because they no longer rendered any service to the landlord. The *swaraj* for non-Christian tribals was not far off.²⁹

The impact of the national movement which heightened agrarian discontent created a grave situation in 1921 for the local authorities who, of course, did not apprehend any general rising or rebellion like the Birsa uprising in 1921. However they considered the presence of 'inflammable material' in the shape of agrarian grievances in the interior fraught with unpredictable consequences. The involvement of the Mundas, more warlike than the Oraons, who had suffered great spoliation of their rights and privileges at the hands of the *dikus*, was portentous. But there was no violent upheaval. The only incident which came close to it was the minor, unpremeditated scuffle with the police at Sisai³⁰ on June 17, 1922, mentioned earlier.

A turning point in the Tanabhagat movement was a visit by Mahatma Gandhi himself to Ranchi. Gandhi observed the Tanabhagats and wrote about them as follows:

From Chakradharpur to Chaibasa is a pleasant motor ride over a very good road. It was at Chaibasa that I made the acquaintance of the Ho tribe—a most interesting body of men and women, simple as children, with a faith that it is not easy to shake. Many of them have taken to the *charkha* and *khaddar*. Congress workers began the work of reformation among them in 1921. Many have given up eating carrion and some have even taken to vegetarianism. The Mundas are another tribe whom I met at Khunti on my way to Ranchi. . . . Among these tribes there is quite a colony of them called Bhaktas, literally meaning devotees. They are believers in *khaddar*. Men as well as women ply the *charkha* regularly. They wear *khaddar* woven by themselves. Many of them had walked miles with their *charkhas* on their shoulders. I saw nearly four hundred of them all plying their *charkhas* assiduously at the meeting I had the privilege of addressing. They have their own *bhajans* which they sing in chorus.³¹

By 1921–22 the Tanabhagats' merger with the Congress movement was complete. They became members of the Congress party and ardent supporters of the national cause. They trekked long distances to attend

the annual sessions of the Congress. Their commitment to the Congress ideology was whole-hearted, they tenaciously clung to the national party at considerable personal sacrifice. Their lands were auctioned because they would not pay rent, they were under attack by missionaries, loyalists and *zamindars*; yet they survived. As Rajendra Prasad observed:

Two days prior to the Gaya Congress some 3 to 4 hundred Adivasis arrived in Gaya walking nearly 200 miles from Ranchi and neighbouring areas. They had brought with them their rations and even earthen wares. All they wanted was some space in the mango groves to stay in and cook their food. We were so taken up with their enthusiasm for the Congress that we allowed them to camp in the grove. Their faith in the Congress was so deep that they were prepared to do anything for it.³²

As a more concrete demonstration of their enthusiasm.

when they heard that the earth work on the *pandal* was incomplete, these Adivasis rushed to our office and asked for spades. They worked so hard and enthusiastically that within two days the entire work was completed. The Reception Committee was overjoyed at the Adivasis coming to the rescue and presented each one of them with a free membership badge and a Gandhi cap. It was touching to see their happiness when they received these. Several years later when I happened to visit Ranchi some of these Adivasis whom I met proudly exhibited their caps with badges pinned on them.³³

Commitment to Non-Violence

Though the Tanas joined the Freedom Movement and greatly admired the Mahatma who was looked upon as an incarnation of their own Jatra, their commitment to non-violence, was not complete. Often they would think of tribal revenge:

We are plying the spinning wheel which sounds *san san*. The spinning wheel has become the cannon, the spade has become the spear. The spinning needle has become a cup. Kill the army with bullets while they are sleeping. The Ganga will flow in every house and we will play with spears in every village. We will bring about independence. We will take control of the whole world. We will not be afraid of handcuffs or of jail, and we will jump onto the gallows. We will get *swaraj*, our rent-free land.³⁴

At the back of their mind, there lay the urge to go back to the past, to regain what they had lost, to re-establish the tribal *raj* through their participation in the Freedom Movement:

Pull brother pull, pull everything, pull the government, pull the Maharaja (*zamindar*), pull the officer, pull the order, pull the police station, pull the police. O God, give us back our right, give us

our possession; we will be officers, we will rule. Give us wisdom, give us law, give us writing power, give us reading capacity; we will make the law, we will be the judges, we will populate the land and cultivate it. We will enjoy life; we do not want any more of trouble until Eternity.³⁵

CONCLUSION

The Tanas today form a community of ten thousand *bhagats*, a very small part of the Oraon tribe; they also include some Munda and Kharia converts. The significance of the Tana movement lay in the fact that it was one of the few tribal movements to be integrated with the political mainstream of the freedom struggle. Under its impact the agrarian issues were radicalized, and expectations were aroused to a point where they could not be satisfied. Few realize that behind the facade of Tanabhagats' hysterics and theatricals that puzzle an observer today lies an agrarian tragedy complicated by expectations that involvement in a political movement generates. When independence came and lands remained largely unrestored, in spite of the laws enacted by the Congress Government, disillusionment set in.

The discussions above also highlight the process of the transformation of a small peasant-tribal community fighting on a millennial and reformist platform into a bastion of the freedom struggle in tribal areas. Almost in one leap this group which was seeking restoration of its land joined the struggle for *swaraj* under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and thus significantly widened its area of activities and expanded its consciousness from the local to the national level. This is in sharp contrast to what happened with other tribal movements which stayed away from the mainstream of the freedom struggle and which sought autonomy of all types once freedom was attained. However, participation in the freedom struggle did not subsume and destroy local identities and aspirations. Both local and national identities survived and were not regarded as mutually exclusive. The Tanabhagats fought for the country's freedom and also for the restoration of their land rights proving thereby that the struggle for freedom was waged not only to emancipate people from the colonial system but also to put an end to exploitation of all types.

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- 11 These included the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, Prohibitions for the Tana Oraons, Tana Hymns and Songs, *Ontam Diya*, i.e., Unity of Life, *Mantras*, *Dharam Tana Updesh*, i.e., Tana doctrines, and Tana *Bhajans*
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- 14 *Report of the Political Agent on the Kisan-Oraon Rebellion in the Surguja State*, 20 June 1918, Progs Nos 1-6, *op cit*
- 15 *Ibid*
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- 18 '*Chechari-Mahuadaur Diary*', kept at the bungalow of the Catholic Mission (Mahuadaur), 1912-18 gives brief but interesting glimpses of the happenings from April 23 to April 28 and 29, when the missionary bade farewell to the barricades, which was no longer needed, and regretted good-humouredly missing his chance of getting the V C (Victoria Cross)
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- 29 File No 75 of 1921, *op cit*
- 30 The police represented this incident as an attack on the police *thana* File No 316, *Confidential Files*
- 31 Quoted in K K Datta, *Writings and Speeches of Gandhiji relating to Bihar from 1927 to 1947*, published by the Government of Bihar, Patna, March 1967, pp 181-2
- 32 Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, pp 187-88 Rajendra Prasad is however wrong in contrasting the Tanabhags' adherence to the principles of non-violence under the influence of the Freedom Movement with their action in killing thousands of sheep and goats in forests This was a typical tribal act, inspired by a *bhagat* movement and had nothing to do with the national movement under the Mahatma's leadership See the author's *Birsa Munda and His Movement*
- 33 *Ibid*, p 188
- 34 Taken from a thesis on the Tanabhat submitted to the Patna University in 1967
- 35 Tana *bhajans* collected by the author

REVIEW ARTICLE

Agrarian Power and Agricultural Productivity

Meghnad Desai, Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph and Ashok Rudra (eds.), *Agrarian Power and Agricultural Productivity in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984.

It may be appropriate to begin with some background information on the parentage of the volume under review, the essential tasks set for it, and the conclusions relating to the central problematic. The volume is a product of the endeavours of a subcommittee, on South Asia Political Economy (SAPE), of the Joint Committee on South Asia of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). One of the editors, Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph, while tracing the intellectual genealogy of the volume, informs us that the underlying motive of SSRC is 'to define 'the research agendas for understanding how to achieve equity and growth in Third World countries ' However, the *central problematic* of the research agenda addressed in this particular volume was 'how local power structures impinge upon levels of and changes in agricultural production and productivity'

After having defined the intellectual agenda, the planners of the project envisioned a research alliance. The working group that emerged cut across disciplinary as well as ideological boundaries. We are informed that the working group did not attempt to settle on agreed-upon methodological or conceptual frameworks, although it is claimed that 'a universe of common discourse' was created—(unfortunately universe that remains elusive!) Not insisting on agreed-upon a methodological or conceptual frameworks may be very good, but the least that one would expect from a volume of this kind is a systematic setting out of the crucial points of difference, and some dialogue around these. However, this expectation is not fulfilled.

Let us come to the intellectual division of labour around the central problematic, that of examining possible reciprocal relationships between local power structures on the one hand, and the generation, allocation, appropriation and disposal of resources in agriculture on the other. Two 'state-of-the art' papers, one by S. Chakravarty from the 'perspective of the economic tradition', and one by Ronald J. Herring from a 'more political perspective', together with David Ludden's scanning of the literature on South Asian agrarian history (covering

important publications in English) are intended to suggest the major issues and controversies affecting this field. Contributions by Donald Attwood, B.B. Chaudhuri, Meghnad Desai, Ashok Rudra, and Lloyd Rudolph and S.H. Rudolph are supposed to take up particular substantive issues, clarifying some of the central concepts, e.g., agrarian power, productivity, or the relationship between the two, etc., which animate the volume. (We shall examine this claim later, in some detail.) However, what we have just said does not give a sufficient clue to the individual contributions. Hence, we shall, very briefly, state the thrust of each of these (in the order of their appearance in the volume).

THE INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

Donald W. Attwood, in his essay on 'Capital and the Transformations of Agrarian Class Systems: Sugar Production in India', seeks to explain a high rate of growth of productivity in the sugar industry of western India, in terms of its high requirements of capital—a cropping system which demands heavy capital investment also stimulates a high demand for human capital—that is, for skills to manage the investment-efficiency'. Efforts to improve managerial efficiency then stimulate technical and organizational innovations which provide something of an internal engine for growth and structural transformation (p. 22). Thus along with explaining growth, Attwood argues, the logic of economic processes also reshapes the production system, including the system of class relations. Clearly his argument, logically a neat one, with its focus on the importance of capital and expertise (reverberations of Schumpeter's argument are quite distinct), captures a significant factor explaining growth and transformation, but it would obviously require major qualifications in specific instances, depending on the balance of other relevant variables; as Attwood himself acknowledges, his argument 'is intended to complement, rather than displace, others based on ecology, history and social structure' (p. 46).

David Ludden's contribution, 'Productive Power in Agriculture: A Survey of Work on the Local History of British India', intended to be both bibliographic and analytical, is primarily of the former sort. Even at that, it is not exhaustive, as Ludden himself acknowledges.

The central argument of B.B. Chaudhuri's essay, ('Rural Power Structure and Agricultural Productivity in Eastern India, 1757–1947'), is that agricultural stagnation in parts of greater Bengal during this period was not due primarily, or even mainly, to the nature of the rural power structure. Chaudhuri uses 'rural power' to mean the power derived from control over land, reinforced occasionally by control over rural credit; changes in the size of cultivation are used as proxies for productivity (in view of the inadequacy of the available productivity data). In terms of these definitions, he critically analyses the main components of the rural power structure in a dynamic setting, and examines its relationship with productivity with a great deal of

caution, making good use of the available literature and data. The essay has significant insights to offer, and after a detailed examination, Chaudhuri explicitly warns against stressing the 'autonomous role of the rural power structure in determining the shape of the economy', while arguing for a recognition of the profound influence of a myriad of diverse developments 'on which the rural power structure only marginally impinged'.

Meghnad Desai has contributed a theoretical paper on 'Power and Agrarian Relations: Some Concepts and Measurements', which, in my opinion, is the least inspiring of the lot, in spite of its rigorous appearance. He defines and measures power in terms of maximal and actual shares in the economic surplus of the various groups—landlords, tenants, share-croppers and labourers—while setting up a model in terms of a single landlord vis-à-vis tenants, share-croppers and landless labourers. From this model, some simple measures of power in terms of 'distance' are derived in the single period and the dynamic context relating to a single landlord. Then Desai goes on to aggregate these measures over all landlords to derive a 'measure' of the power structure (as if 'class power' were a simple aggregation of the individuals' power). He concludes with some remarks as to how his measure could be applied empirically. Desai's contribution is possibly a good example of what one should not do in the name of Marxian Political Economy, a point which we shall take up later.

Ronald J. Herring's essay on 'Economic Consequences of Local Power Configurations in Rural South Asia', clearly stands out for its broad and comprehensive conceptual canvas and insightful comments, while addressing issues related to the main theme. His argument is that 'the question of deployment of (extracted) surplus, particularly over time, is more critical for explaining change in productivity than is the mode of appropriation of surplus. . . . The classes which determine the deployment of economic resources locally exhibit remarkable variability, flexibility and adaptability in economic decision-making quite inconsistent with static determinist models; structure is by no means unimportant, but it is not determinative' (p. 199). This 'flexibility and adaptability' cannot be analysed, Herring argues convincingly, without reference to the articulation of local structures within the national political economy, and the integration of State and society at the village level—an argument with which the present reviewer is in broad sympathy.

Ashok Rudra's study of 'Local Power and Farm-level Decision-making', based on data concerning economic arrangements and 'transactions' between different sections in some villages in contemporary West Bengal, concludes that it is the realities of local power and the resulting patron-client relationships, rather than economic considerations proper, that determine farm-level decisions. By 'locality' he means the village, and by 'power' 'a social phenomenon given rise to by such institutional factors as class

divisions, caste hierarchy, distribution of wealth and income, occupational patterns, etc., and such ideological forces such as customs, traditions, taboos, etc., affecting the process of decision-making by economic agents' (p. 251). According to Rudra, this concept 'excludes the concept of economic power', and 'includes political power in so far as it is born out of the local social structure and applied by local agents but excludes State power as applied by the representatives of the State to the local community'. Rudra's reasoning here seems quite unsatisfactory and fuzzy, even though his concern to 'focus on issues which are left out of the ambit of received theories' is understandable. His lines of demarcation (between different concepts of power) are not only arbitrary, but contradictory too. For instance, he understands 'economic power' as 'the command over and the access to resources which an agent can acquire by virtue of his possession of wealth or his entitlement to income' (p. 251), which seems already included in the concept of power which he wishes to use for his essay. However, in spite of standing on such sandy soils, Rudra demonstrates very convincingly the helplessness of neoclassical economic theorising even in coming to grips with the questions it pretends to pose, let alone those which form the nuts-and-bolts of any historically and culturally sensitive analysis. To buttress his arguments, he engages in a detailed examination of the considerations involved in the transactions between employers and labourers, tenants and landlords, and agricultural moneylenders, while describing how 'local power' of the village society affects farm-level decision-making. In doing so, he claims to focus on 'three kinds of local power'—the first is 'exercised by the minority consisting of property owners over the majority consisting of labourers'; the second is 'exercised by the labourers over the property owners' (or the countervailing power of the labourers'); and the third 'consists of certain ideological forces of customs, traditions, taboos, etc., and applies to all sections of the population' (p. 252). But it is the last of these on which Rudra's attention dwells most; in that, he brings us to the threshold (but not really beyond) of what is christened, in high-brow social theory, as 'mentalities'. It should be stressed that, although Rudra neatly demolishes certain received ways of thinking, his own contribution does not go far beyond a useful description of certain aspects of rural society and economy, relating to the main theme, and his conceptualisation remains highly problematic at best.

The essay contributed by Lloyd J Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph on 'Determinants and Varieties of Agrarian Mobilisation', does not really address itself to the issues related to the main theme of the volume, and the reasons for its inclusion are not quite clear. Hence, I shall confine myself only to a couple of perfunctory comments. Given the task the essay sets for itself, it provides a useful and detailed discussion around objective determinants of agrarian mobilisation, problems of leadership, prospects of different kinds of mobilisation, etc., but remains quite untidy analytically. Catchy conceptual

categories like 'Bullock Capitalists', one of the four agrarian classes distinguished on the basis of the size distribution of operational holdings and 'global qualitative or non-quantified characteristics' (whatever that means!) pose insurmountable problems, which the Rudolphs tend to wish away (even after having recognised a couple of these). Many of the facts and impressions, which form the basis of their analysis, are open to very different interpretations. Moreover, even for investigating the strictly restricted purpose of their chosen theme (i.e., mobilisation), the framework suggested by them does not take us anywhere. Even an acquaintance with ongoing agrarian struggles in Bihar is sufficient to assert so. Again, one of their major arguments, about 'establishment of bullock capitalists as a hegemonic class in Indian politics', over the next decade, is too simplistic. However, for reasons of space, I shall avoid a critical discussion of any of these problems here.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty's essay is primarily in the nature of a critical survey of certain issues relating power to agricultural productivity. One could justifiably complain that the number of issues taken up by Chakravarty is fairly limited, and the treatment often taxonomic, in spite of important insights. Following the thread of his main argument, he seems to suggest that there is no systematic relationship between power structures and changes in agricultural productivity; whatever be the power structure, changes in agricultural productivity can take place depending on 'appropriate economic signals' and other relevant variables. For him, then, the question of examining these signals and variables becomes crucially important. Historically, existing power structures have combined with the availability of certain investment options to influence productivity. Thus power structures could impinge on the organisation of production differently, depending on the specific situation exogenous to the power structures, as well as specific differences within themselves. Specific differences within power-structures would influence productivity depending on the nature of the objective function of the actors, logic of economic arrangements (such as extent of cohesiveness amongst landowners), etc. Whether an 'involved situation', analysed by Clifford Geertz, and which has been discussed in the Indian context under the general rubric of semi-feudalism, can generate the necessary responsiveness to potentially yield-raising innovations would depend on all these factors. It should be stressed that Chakravarty recognises power relations as being the pervasive feature of rural economic relations, and hence makes a strong case for endogenising them into economic analysis, suggesting ways of doing so, while pointing out certain relevant problems in various approaches to the study of Indian agriculture. Let us also note that he is primarily concerned with 'economic power' (by which he seems to mean differential access to resources), although the influence of 'political power' on productivity is briefly touched upon (as is the reciprocity between power and

productivity). A clear statement of Chakravarty's conceptualisation of power/power-structure, and his reasons for it, was certainly desirable.

Thus, it would be obvious, that as far as the conclusions relating to the central problematic are concerned, the contributors are far from being agreed on the nature of the relationship between power and productivity. That, in any case, is as would have been expected. However, students of Indian agriculture would find that most of the arguments are fairly well-known, and the volume does not really break any new ground. Often, it is not only the same old wine, but the same old bottle too. Our intention in what follows is to confine ourselves to a couple of important issues which are of a general nature in relation to the volume. But before we do that, let us briefly respond to some of the claims explicitly stated in the editorial introduction.

APPROACH FROM WITHIN

We are informed that in order to approximate to a contextual understanding of the central problematic, the need to delineate an approach from 'within' was focussed upon. A 'careful delineation of indigenous conceptual systems, goals and institutions' was emphasised, and it had to be linked 'with systematic observation and analysis from external perspectives'. The commonsense message behind such a concern seems obvious. The twentieth century has seen an increasing proliferation of philosophical doubts about the possibility of modelling the social disciplines on a traditional image of the natural sciences, and most of the sceptics and iconoclasts have tended to emphasise the importance of the local and the contingent and the extent to which our own concepts and attitudes have been conditioned by particular historical matrices, while expressing a correspondingly strong dislike of all overarching theories and singular schemes of explanation. Hence the above-mentioned theoretical concern is obviously justifiable, but unfortunately, its meaning is never spelt out concretely. In fact it remains hollow, as there is no systematic effort, by the contributors to the volume, to fulfil this strongly-felt need.

The other major claim is that 'most of the studies in this volume seek to supply the linkages required to integrate the value and relevance of aggregate and specific formulations' along both vertical and horizontal dimensions'. The problem of the vertical is seen as how the study of one level elucidates the study of others. 'Level' refers to geopolitical locations (the centre, state, district, village), to degrees of empirical specificity or theoretical abstraction; and to the extent to which data are or are not contextualised'. Unfortunately this claim is also treated as non-seriously as the earlier one, and there is not much to it beyond editorial lip-service. If for the volume as a whole, there is no well-defined conceptual universe, then any claim of supplying 'linkages' through individual contributions is untenable, even *a priori*. As linkage between specificity and abstraction, Rudolph cites the illustration of the spectrum covered by economists contributing to the

volume. However, in relation to the central problematic, it remains a Herculean task to identify any linkage between their contributions. In fact, as we have already noted, even the framework adopted and the conceptualisation of basic concepts are radically different in their respective contributions. I fail to see any linkage between specificity and abstract generality with such different conceptualisations.

As for the geopolitical dimensions of the vertical, it is banal to say that 'local power structures have a propensity to direct, redirect and appropriate to their own purposes whatever policies national and state legislation mandated'. Similarly it is commonplace that 'higher levels also contain local power; system levels affect each other reciprocally' But how and why? What is the conceptual terrain and analytical framework within which we could situate these processes, in some coherent fashion? Except in a couple of contributions, especially Herring's, there is no serious attempt to even pose these questions, let alone provide answers.

We could note here in passing a recent work by Arvind Das, which without any tall claims, tries to achieve such 'linkage', in a historical perspective.¹ To quote from his epilogue—

The specificities of the location of Changel, its relative inaccessibility, the fertility of the soil, the changing pattern of its natural ecology, all contributed to its particular history. . Imperialism and the nationalist response, the specificities of the mode of production and peasant movements, trade and commerce, caste and religion—almost all the 'big' schematic patterns which are unfolded by the broad historical exercises of contemporary scholarship—were all present, albeit in miniaturized form, in this little universe

Das's account of the history of Changel is a good interweaving of the elemental roles played by the State and capital, along with Nature, and as he says, 'to pun a bit, neither were the elementary aspects of peasant consciousness absent'.

However, the problem of the vertical linkage between contextual and non-contextual data is sharply brought into focus by this volume. The argument that macro-aggregative time series data such as those prepared by the Census and the NSS may be useful for estimating trends and magnitudes but cannot capture anything more in terms of understanding the processes they seek to explain, is very well substantiated. For instance, as Rudra's study reveals, village-wise wage variation suggests that the factors affecting the process of wage-determination are at least partially village-specific. Herring's contribution shows that wage rates vary not only across villages, but also across farms and across labourers in the same village area. Thus clearly such tools of analysis as the aggregate supply and the aggregate demand function cannot be applied to labourers and employers respectively aggregated over the different villages, or even

- within individual villages. Although it is to labour the obvious, such arguments hold very important methodological lessons for many received theories

Let us now move on to a couple of important issues. One of the fundamental problems with the volume, in my view, relates to the inadequate, and often ambiguous, treatment of the notions/concepts central to the project. We shall limit our attention to three of these—political economy, productivity and power—in that order.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

According to the editorial introduction, the 'divergence of methodological cosmologies' led them to avoid a common definition of political economy, for them, 'political economy was more an approach than a concept'. Fair enough—but any reader would expect greater elucidation of this 'approach', and a critical dialogue between divergent 'methodological cosmologies', more so, when there has been a resurgence of 'political economy', and it has also become a buzz-phrase in the current literature. According to the Cumulative Book Index (the world bibliography of publications in the English language), Paul Baran's classic, *The Political Economy of Growth*, was the only book on political economy to be published in 1957 (indeed, it was only the third new publication on political economy to have been produced since 1953); in 1983, over 50 new volumes in English were launched, each with a title beginning *The Political Economy of* . . . The trend is obvious. Michael Barratt Brown lists eighteen different models of political economy, while David K. Whynes offers eight perspectives (which don't really resemble Brown's models).² The list is not exhaustive! In such a situation, a sceptic could be reminded of a short story by Borges, in which he refers to 'a certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which 'animals are divided into (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) suckling pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camel-hair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, and (n) that from a long way off look like flies'.

Even individual contributors rarely care to spell out their respective notions—Ronald J. Herring and Meghnad Desai being the exceptions. Herring, right at the outset, states what he means by political economy, and his contribution is a good illustration of his notion. However, Desai's claim, that his approach derives more from the Marxian Political Economy tradition, might not be enthusiastically received. Scepticism about his claim could be addressed at various levels. To begin with, one could quibble over the basic structure of his model, its building blocks and certain ambiguities in it (e.g., 3rd term on R.H.S. in eq 5), or his modelling strategy *a la* Satish Jain and Anjan Mukherji,³ who suggest a superior modelling strategy while noting 'that the measures of economic power suggested

in the literature, namely, the share in the output and the share in the surplus measures, fail to satisfy the fundamental criterion of acceptability' We choose not to delve into this class of issues here, instead we only respond to his claim about his approach, and with regard to that too, only to a couple of points. Firstly, strictly speaking, Desai's notion of economic surplus is neither Marxian, nor a logical extension of the Marxian notion; at most, it might have a family resemblance to Sraffa's notion of surplus or the Baran-Sweezy concept of 'actual economic surplus', which do not have either any similarity with the Marxian concept nor are the result of a smooth and continuous extension of it.⁴ Moreover, since one of the avowed objectives of Desai's analysis is to forge operational concepts, suitable to empirical analysis, obviously it is not Marxian economic surplus he has in mind. We may also mention that attempts at quantifying concepts like power, exploitation, etc., obfuscate more than reveal. Secondly, as is well known, the Marxist method of analysis is essentially based on dialectical structuring of the relevant core building blocks/theoretical abstraction. Bertell Ollman puts it very simply and clearly when he says, that, 'Dialectics restructures our thinking about reality by replacing the common-sense notion of "thing" as something which has a history and has external connections with other things, with the notion of "process" which contains its history and possible futures, and "relation", which contains as part of what it is its ties with other relations'.⁵ Even when one or the other aspect of the basic abstraction is focussed upon, its organic linkage with other defining aspects (even when they are 'frozen' for analytical reasons), is never lost sight of—that is, the abstraction is grasped in its dialectical complexity. For reasons of space, we avoid a detailed discussion here; however, as an illustration, let us take the example of the concept immediately relevant to the preceding discussion—the concept of surplus. According to Marx, 'The essential difference between the various economic forms of society . . . lies in the mode in which this surplus-labour is in each case extracted from the actual producer, the laborer.'⁶ Thus, for Marx, the aim was to structure the concept of surplus for each epoch so as to capture its historical specificity. Non-Marxian notions of economic surplus (including Desai's notion), with the air of historical generality, are non-dialectical, thus missing the forest for the trees; whereas the Marxian notion of surplus value, with its historical specificity, is relational, that is to say, it describes a particular social relation, a dialectic of class conflict between producers and non-producers in a particular historical period. Thus surplus-value, in Marxian analysis, is the form in which surplus is extracted from wage-labourers and, as such, it refers to the form of exploitation characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. Mention of a particular methodological feature in Desai's approach might further clarify our point. Desai's hypothesis of surplus as a measure of power, focusses solely on distribution 'Whereas, one of the distinguishing

features of Marx's political economy is that distribution is not independent of production but, since particular class relations tend to perpetuate themselves, is actually determined by it. Marx's work is littered with his emphasis on this organic relationship. For instance, in the 'Introduction' to the *Grundrisse*, he says: 'The relations and modes of distribution thus appear merely as the obverse of the agents of production. An individual who participates in production in the form of wage-labour shares in the products . . . in the form of wages. Distribution is itself a product of production . . . in that the specific kind of participation in production determines . . . the pattern of participation in distribution'.⁷ Marx would have thought it ludicrous that someone might assume that distribution could vary on 'a continuous scale between 0 and 1 whereby one can have either a complete or a fluctuating share' (Desai, p. 173). We quote from Marx not for theological reasons—it is only to emphasise the superiority of a particular approach descending from him, in comparison to the alternatives claiming the same parentage.

Maybe we have dwelt too long on this issue, but let us briefly remark on a couple of related points, lest we are misunderstood, before we go on to the concept of productivity. Obviously, from the point of view of the Marxian tradition, the objection is not to forging new operational concepts and theoretical abstractions, mathematical (one does not fight over mathematics *à la* Joan Robinson, however the specific use of mathematics does become a battle-ground), or otherwise. It would be foolish to do so, since, firstly, all sciences are constantly in the process of establishing themselves, and secondly, it would be a complete misunderstanding of the tradition in question. Perhaps it is to labour the obvious, yet it might be useful to look at a couple of related procedural points explicitly stated by Marx. In the preface to the first edition of *Capital*, he says: 'In the analysis of economic forms . . . neither microscopes, nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of abstraction must replace both.'⁸ At another place, he says, 'Of course the method of presentation must differ *in form* from that of enquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyse its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connection. Only after this work is done, can the actual moment be adequately described'.⁹ The preceding quotation from Marx is relevant here as it emphasises the organic link between abstractions and reality, a point often emphasised by him. The following statement from his 1857 'Introduction' captures the same spirit, 'The subject society, must always be envisaged therefore as the pre-condition of comprehension, even when the theoretical method is employed.'

To put it briefly: the subject, in Marxist enquiry, is society, and the theoretical method 'assimilates' it. The problem, as generations of Marxists have seen it, 'Is to construct a science of society that is coherent, in that it has a solid, shared, theoretical scheme; total, that is able to include all useful areas of analysis within its jurisdiction; and

dynamic, since, as no stability is eternal, the most important thing to discover is the principle of change.¹⁰ Marxian Political Economy is distinguished, in this general scheme, by the (ever accumulating) specific questions that it attempts to deal with, core questions being those related to production and appropriation.

We are avoiding any reference to the discussion relating to 'levels' of abstraction here. As is well-known, Althusser has made observations of importance in this regard, and there has been a vigorous discussion around those. I am in sharp disagreement with Althusser's apparent insistence on a level. In fact Marx clearly used more than one level. In any case it does not seem useful to talk of a level of abstraction and its *a priori* appropriateness. Choice of a particular level could be conditioned by, apart from other things, intellectual preference, the imposing necessity of *praxis* outside purely theoretical *praxis*, the nature of the problematic, and so on. At one extreme of the spectrum, there is a most abstract kind of analysis, and on the other, there is a type of analysis which is sometimes called 'issuing history in action'—something in the nature of Lewin's endeavour.

Let us get back to Desai's contribution. He assumes that 'the emphasis on analytical, operational concepts inevitably means that the more qualitative, sociological-history considerations . . . will be ignored' (p. 177); and hence, his approach merely implies a 'shift in focus'. As should be obvious from the above discussion, our objection is not to his assumed 'shift in focus', but to his approach. His other 'defence' is that 'it also means that the approach can be compared with the usual paradigm'. It must be said, that the idea of approaching Marx in the light of Walras or Marshall, is a bit too much.

PRODUCTIVITY

The seemingly straightforward and simple notion of productivity is conceptually problematic. The volume under discussion definitely shows awareness of the problems associated with the conceptualisation of productivity, but the treatment is far from satisfactory. Given the stated task set for one volume, such negligence is unwarranted. However the contribution by Herring, and to a lesser extent, by Chaudhuri, provide some idea of the complex analytical and logistical problems associated with the concept. To begin with, there is the problem of appropriate norms to measure productivity. As Herring points out, the conventional conceptualisation of productivity does not move beyond 'traditional unidimensional standards such as yield', and focusses attention only on those economic resources actually employed in production, whereas any such evaluation of an economic system must include consideration of the potential production forgone by the underutilisation of available resources. It is important to ask—productive from whose (which class) perspective? Equally important, in conceptualising productivity there is the problem of the static versus

the dynamic. And when we come to the dynamic, the neat story of an efficient growth path is too naive, and analyses situated in a broadly Marxist theoretical framework (for instance, Paul Baran's *magnum opus*-*The Political Economy of Growth*), offer many lessons.

It should be clear from the aforesaid that the notion of productivity is very much framework and theory specific, and the marginalist notion is a bit too marginal to be of any value.

POWER

The notion of power is one of those central concepts in the social sciences which have proved to be intuitively simple but quite intractable otherwise. In fact, there has been a veritable explosion in social theory around the concept of power over the past three decades, yet it remains a tough nut. Unfortunately, the volume under review treats the concept of power very unsatisfactorily, although there are a variety of meanings explicit/implicit in the essays contributed to it. Hence, it may be a good idea to take a detour, a longish one this time, to get a taste of some of the problems associated with the conceptualisation of power and to state our preference for certain ways of thinking.

A voluminous literature has accumulated around the notion of power by now; even the set of definitions is bewilderingly large. It goes without saying that the discourses around the concept of power have crystallised according to a number of specific conceptual oppositions, involving issues of method, theory and politics (This is further complicated by the self-imposed boundaries of various disciplines; in the following we have tended to cut across disciplinary boundaries.) One end of the spectrum is occupied by the so-called 'pluralist' view, with its emphasis on behaviourism. Dahl's description is fairly representative of this view, when he says that 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.'¹¹ Those closer to this view have often attempted to define precisely/formalise rigorously what power means. The outcome, usually, has been a ridiculously narrow notion, and even those associated with this view have, at times, tended to counsel despair. William Riker, for instance, feels that the concept should be banished;¹² James March says that it is disappointing,¹³ and Robert Dahl admits that many students of the subject feel that the study of power is a bottomless swamp.¹⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, we have a delirious neo-anarchist, a Nietzschean in many crucial respects, Michel Foucault, for whom the exercise of power 'is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely'—thus an all-embracing view is offered.¹⁵ In between we have a great multitude of views regarding power as the intentional capacity of individuals/groups to realise their objectives (with or without the observable clash of interests), or regarding power as a structural feature of social systems, and so on, grappling with the

problems of encompassing 'false consciousness', 'real interest', etc. Some theorists have tended to distinguish between 'power to' and 'power over', emphasising its usefulness for any meaningful analysis.¹⁶ Theorists concerned solely with 'power to' tend to gloss over power as a relational entity, as the focus is on a 'facility', a 'capacity', not a relationship, in most cases, 'power to' is merely a liberal-juridical concept

One line of approach has excelled in erecting elaborate typologies of different types of power, distinguishing between force, coercion, manipulation, persuasion, influence and authority, legitimate or illegitimate power, etc.¹⁷ Clearly this could become an endless game. Thus given that power is 'not a thing at all but many things'¹⁸ involving issues of method, ideology, etc.—battlegrounds of major import for social theorists—a typology developed by Steven Lukes¹⁹ becomes quite useful, *as an initial organising scheme*, which helps to explicate certain important terms of debate

LUKES' SCHEME

In Lukes' scheme, the first model of power is what he calls the 'one-dimensional view', associated with Dahl, Polsby, Wolfinger, etc., that focusses on overt decision-making behaviour as the principal manifestation of power. As stated above, the 'pluralist' view finds its place here. Historically, the focus of analysis, of the one-dimensional view, has been the individual. Lukes sums it up as follows: 'the one-dimensional view of power involves a focus on behavior in the making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation' (p. 15). Within this one-dimensional view, the central focus of the definition may vary—it could be on resources, behaviour, final outcome etc.—however, Lukes's account captures it neatly

Let us also note in passing that various attempts to formalise and measure power mathematically, at times seemingly unrelated, do not go beyond the narrow boundaries set by the one-dimensional view; in fact, they end up being narrower still. At best such attempts should be seen as intellectual curiosities.²⁰

Lukes identifies the two-dimensional view of power, represented according to him by Bachrach and Baratz's work,²¹ primarily as a qualified critique of the behaviourist focus of the one-dimensional view. The two-dimensional view recognises non-decision-making as well as decision-making—the 'second face' of power—while arguing that suppressing challenge to the interests of the decision-maker is another form of exercising power. However, this view argues that a non-decision is a type of (potentially observable) decision—thus Lukes' suggestion that the two-dimensional view of power is merely a qualified critique of the first view. We should also add that the

individual continues to remain the unit of analysis in the two-dimensional view.

Lukes' three-dimensional conception of power, stressing the importance of ideological legitimation, seems to draw inspiration from the Gramscian concept of hegemony (however, he does not travel the full distance with Gramsci). Thus his three-dimensional view is also concerned with deeply-embedded, invisible levels of social power where wants, desires, needs, goods, preferences, etc. get ingrained at an unconscious level, where social units are the significant actors, and where latent/potential conflicts are an essential manifestation of the exercise of power²²

However, Lukes' three-dimensional view remains far from adequate, and highly problematic. This is partly so because of his instance that 'the identification of those interests (real interests) ultimately always rests on empirically supportable and refutable hypotheses'. Thus his conception becomes crucially dependent on the criterion of the 'counterfactual case'. Lukes, after discussing a couple of convenient situations in an unsatisfactory, ambiguous and terribly sketchy fashion, concludes that 'in general, evidence can be adduced (though by nature of the case, such evidence will never be conclusive) which supports the relevant counterfactuals implicit in identifying exercises of power of the three-dimensional type' (p. 50). It is easy to see that one can construct any number of arbitrary counterfactual cases; Lukes' optimism that it can be highly instructive, ostensibly to construct counterfactuals, 'to observe how people behave in "abnormal" times'—when (*ex hypothesi*) submission and intellectual subordination are absent or diminished, when the apparatus of power is removed or relaxed', is not a very useful guide. First of all, this idea of 'abnormal times' is, at best, utterly vague, and at worst circular to the counterfactual chosen or constructed; moreover, in any 'abnormal time', a social group may behave in a myriad number of ways—many of which would not betray conflict—depending on different constellations of forces. Thinking in terms of counterfactuals is further compounded if power is conceived in a dynamic sense—i.e., its extension into space and time, and its essential attributes like speed are kept in mind. Lukes's assertion reduces his three-dimensional view to essentially a positivist-Popperian conception, to be more precise. One crucial problem remains—given the ideological manipulation of society, in what manner will 'real interests' of different social groups be determined?

Another crucial component of Lukes' three-dimensional view is the notion of agency; for him, A's exercise of power over B must be, in some sense, intentional. Lukes argues that the line must be drawn between structural determination and an exercise of power. According to him the determinist position adopted by the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser and his followers, notably Nicos Poulantzas, does not leave any place for power by conceptually assimilating it to structural

determination Poulantzas (in his book, *Political Power and Social Classes*) defines power as 'the capacity of a social class to realise its specific objective interests', and argues that his concept 'points to the effects of the structure on the relations of conflict between the practices of the various classes in "struggle". In other words, power is not located in the levels of structures, but is an effect of the ensemble of these levels ...'.²³ For Lukes, to repeat, 'to identify a given process as an "exercise of power", rather than as a case of structural determination, is to assume that it is in the exerciser's or exercisers' power to act differently' (p 55). This is going to the other extreme. In his eagerness to rehabilitate the 'subject' and to oppose 'extreme determinism', Lukes goes overboard, thus drastically narrowing down the conception of power and the space of his radical conflict model. In conceptualising power relations, it may be analytically undesirable to collapse non-subjective/structural and dispositional/intentional, but it is equally undesirable to counterpose these, and talk of power in terms of one or the other.

However, if Lukes does not insist on the aforementioned problematic features in his conceptualisation, (which could be done by taking these components out of the 'core' of his model), then we are still left with a three-dimensional view, which is far more useful, and permits a dialogue between Lukes' conception and other important ways of conceptualising power, notably within the Marxist tradition (taking the modified three-dimensional core as the base-line). Different conceptions of power have emerged within the Marxist tradition, but the fundamental polarisation has tended to feed upon the assumed dichotomy between 'structural determinism' (with its subject-phobia), and 'subjectivism'. It is neither necessary nor possible here to discuss/synthesise the relevant vast literature that has grown since Marx. Let us simply note that maintaining such a dichotomy is undesirable; and, as 'historicist' (where the historical 'subject' has a crucial role to play) Marxism claims, it is absolutely imperative to transcend such a dichotomy, in order to construct Marxist explanations. The structural deterministic conception of the 'Althusserian variety, where power essentially reflects a hypostatized set of interests (and is located in the economy as a determinant in the last instance),²⁴ is inadequate and not very helpful, as we have emphasised earlier. 'Historicist' Marxist conceptions of power, as emerging from the works of Lenin, Gramsci, Lukes, Korsch, Sartre and Lucien Goldmann, amongst other Marxist thinkers, is not merely a function of the economic; for them, on the one hand, power is a structural feature of the social totality dialectically related to structured asymmetry of resources, economic or otherwise, on the other, it is attributable to historical 'subjects'/agents—classes, groups, individuals, etc.—in terms of the effect of its exercise. Such a Marxist conception, I submit, is a preferable option. Let us note in passing that in recent years, this conception has benefited a great deal from the insights of the social theorists

following the 'Frankfurt School', and Marxist psychoanalysts drawing a great deal upon the repression theories of Freud and Wilhelm Reich.

FOUCAULT'S CONTRIBUTION

Lukes' classification, with suitable modification, has been helpful as an initial organising scheme hitherto; it does not remain so, once we have to encounter late Michel Foucault, one of the most influential thinkers of our time and a cult figure of French philosophy after Sartre till his death. One of Foucault's central objectives had been 'to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects',²⁵ and in this pursuit he expatiated, particularly in the last two decades of his life, on the discourses of power and the power of discourse ('power-knowledge'), adopting a highly original Nietzschean perspective where the will-to-truth is the will-to-power. It must be recognised that Foucault was attempting to articulate a new discourse, to undermine the existing formulations of society and politics (Marxist or otherwise), in the process subverting the existing concepts and modes of analysis. As a consequence, his writings appear to be complex, at times elusive, and are further compounded by his style and language. Consistency is one of the last things that one should demand from a philosopher who is trying to transcend the existing forms of explanation. Foucault was notoriously inconsistent, and possibly wittingly so. In one of his interviews,²⁶ he said that he would like to see his works function as: 'Molotov Cocktails, or minefields; I would like them to self-destruct after use, like fireworks.' At another place, with reference to his works, he states: 'They are, in the final analysis, just fragments and it is up to you or me to see what we can make of them.'²⁷ Hence it is no wonder that responses to his intellectual personality have been radically different and assessments of his endeavour widely divergent, ranging from outright debunking,²⁸ to blinkered hero-worship.²⁹ Here, we are concerned with the contribution the genealogist of power/knowledge has to make, and that too in terms of a summary of (what I consider to be) the most significant points. As hinted earlier, Foucault's theory of power (if we can call it that), appears to be full of contradictions and innumerable gaps—for instance, in *Power/Knowledge*, he states that 'individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application' (p. 98), whereas the crux of a later text (*The Subject and Power*) is that power is exercised over free subjects. We should also note that he does not try to define power, and refers to it using over scores of different expressions, such as, 'the overall effect of the moving substrata of force relations', a 'complex strategic situation', and so on, however, we should keep in mind that in the Foucauldian conception of power, the concept of force is fundamental, yet undefined (although one might argue that in Foucault's account the 'force relation' is conceptualised with reference to 'resistance'—but then resistance is conceptualised with reference to force, or as the 'irreducible opposite' of power!). There are many such

contradictions. But what clearly emerges from his major texts could be briefly sketched as follows (1) Power is not inherently negative or repressive—thus a theory of productive power is offered by Foucault. In the words of Merquior, Foucauldian power 'produces, it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth'.³⁰ In Foucault's own words, 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations'.³¹ Thus power both 'produces' and 'represses'. In this assertion Foucault breaks from various liberal and radical/Marxist views of power. (2) Foucault proclaims the ubiquity of power, it is an 'unspoken warfare' that reinscribes conflict in various 'social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and everyone of us'.³² In this way, strategies-technologies-programmes of power work to produce 'normalised subjects'. Foucault also holds that this omnipresent power comes from everywhere. To put all this simply, Foucault says that power relations obtain in practically all spheres of life—which is a plausible idea. However, the celebrated 'anatomic gaze' of Foucault, systematically reduces all social processes (economic, social, knowledge-related, etc.) to power relations, leaving these patterns of domination largely unspecified. In fact, Foucault goes scandalously further by exempting power from action analysis (i.e., from intentions and interests—whether objective or subjective). For him, 'power does not build itself by means of wills (individual or collective), nor does it stem from interests. Power builds and works by means of powers, of a host of issues and effects of power'.³³ Although in the same text Foucault does claim that 'power relations are both intentional and non-subjective' (pp. 94-95), in any case a rare realisation, he fails to specify on what sort of basis intentionality can be attributed. To suggest that power strategies have an object and a purpose, as Foucault does repeatedly, but to leave it completely unspecified as to who they serve, is a logically unhappy situation. Let us emphasise again that Foucault expressly rejects any conception of power that retains an account of agency (individual or collective), or a structural conflict model. It all seems a bad kind of structuralism, 'a structuralism', as Piaget said 'without structures'. (3) For Foucault, forms of subjugation and institutions (hospitals, schools, prisons, factories, state apparatuses, etc.), or mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the population are the 'terminal forms' that power takes, not its locus or source. Global domination is, then, the end point of an analysis of power, not its starting point. But then if forms, mechanisms, effects—all these constitute the end-point of the analysis—where does the analysis begin? No answer; and Foucault is unrepentant.

What do we make of it? Notwithstanding the many insights to be gained, especially in his identification of forms and mechanisms of power, Foucault's promise of social power analysis is never quite

fulfilled, and at times, it degenerates into sententious sloganising. One can go along with Foucault in his understanding that the power/knowledge nexus of discourse establishes 'regimes of truth', which with their complex but 'coherent, rational' global strategies, discipline the social body and produce 'normalised' subjects. But from this, it does not follow that an analysis based on agency and interest is not possible. On the contrary, without such a historical analysis, Foucault's understanding remains an ethereal assertion, by simply leaving out everything that counts. Moreover, the reductionist quality of Foucault's position—history as the 'endlessly repeated play of domination'—is unacceptable. He provides us, ultimately, with no way to differentiate between Fascism and Stalinism (two 'diseases of power' as he called them), or between the resistance of the women's movement and say, the Klu Klux Klan. Thus we have a cynical 'analysis' which is politically irresponsible, with almost dangerous consequences. One would agree with Peter Dews that Foucauldian power, 'having nothing determinate to which it could be opposed, loses all explanatory content'.³⁴ It is an irony that the philosopher of power effectively 'depoliticises' power.

Quite often, Foucault's enterprise is seen as an effective challenge to Marxism. For instance, Alan Sheridan suggests that Foucault's political economy (!) should be seen as a definitive and radical break with both the left and the right, and it constitutes a new political theory and practice emerging from the discredit of Marxism.³⁵ Barry Smart thinks that Foucauldian 'transgressive thought' indeed emerges from Marxism's disrepute.³⁶ A more acceptable assessment is that of Colin Gorden's, that Foucault identifies forms of power hitherto neglected, but his enterprise need not be described as a challenge to Marxism. In fact, his contributions are a significant critical intervention, a subversive shock to many a complacent theorist, and as far as a particular kind of Marxism is concerned, a reminder that coarse monolithic class analysis and bourgeois-bashing is of little use. But let us emphasise that many of the important insights of Foucault are not new to the Marxian tradition. The social theorists belonging to 'Frankfurt School', broadly informed by the Marxist tradition, have discussed the operation of power in institutional structures of modern life, in structures of thinking and behaviour, in a far more satisfactory way than the delirious rambling of Michel Foucault. For instance, Habermas's phrase, the 'colonisation of the lifeworld' captures the essence of Foucault's 'increasing normalisation'. But the difference is succinctly captured by Habermas when he says that we must try 'to formulate an idea of progress that is subtle and resilient enough not to let itself be blinded by the mere appearance of emancipation'. Further, he says that 'the thesis that emancipation itself mystifies, must be opposed'.³⁷ Habermas's statement demarcates the Foucauldian enterprise from Critical Theory (and the Marxian tradition in general), in one important way.

In fact, even much before the 'Critical Theorists', Antonio Gramsci was trying to capture 'colonisation' and 'normalisation' while analysing how 'commonsense is the power of the status-quo'. His analysis was based on agency and interests, taking into account multiple, convergent (as well as occasionally divergent) interests and intentions at work, and his theory of hegemony, the essence of which is the appropriation of culture by the dominant classes for the sake of social control, was the most important aspect of his analysis, in this regard.

This is not to say that Marxism has said everything that had to be said about power, or it has already said the last word. Any such statement would be foolish and preposterous. In fact there are important aspects, for instance, in relation to certain inextricable links between the what, why and how of power, that are not well-explored. There could be other important questions about which Marxism has maintained an uncomfortable silence. However, our essential claim is that the Marxist tradition offers frameworks and ways best-suited for social power analysis. Such a claim cannot be contested by constructing caricatures of Marxism and demolishing them, or by provocative sloganising (that Marxism belongs to the nineteenth century 'episteme' as 'fish in water')—all that is undesirable if you care for a critical confrontation. Foucault and Foucauldians, with their close affinity to the 'post-structuralists' who take pride in their sophisticated deconstructive tools and methods, should have known it better! Or is 'double-gesture' reserved only for their own favorites, Nietzsche, for instance?

After this rapid survey of power-theoretic considerations, let us come back to the volume, which forms the focus of our essay. We have already noted that in spite of a variety of implicit/explicit meanings associated with power, the treatment of the concept remains quite unsatisfactory. Some of the meanings have a relatively wide scope and overlap with other meanings, but generally they tend to capture either one or the other power-generating factor, ranging from the 'purely economic' to the 'purely political'. As we have already seen, while recounting the meanings implied by different contributors, in most cases we have structurally generated power notions (some of which are broadly informed by Marxist orientations), but generally it amounts to toying with one or the other fragment of the structure, which cannot be seen simply as a subtle difference in emphasis. Viewed against the backdrop of the above critical survey, the inadequacy of such partial approaches should be obvious.

Equally disturbing is the fact that crucial points of difference between different notions and their implications for the problematic chosen are never set out, thus even the minimal expectation is denied. In fact the treatment of power in the volume remains afflicted by a particular kind of tension—on the one hand the volume wishes to explore power (and its influence on productivity) in a holistic sense, on

the other, it has set a narrower task for itself: that of examining 'local' and 'agrarian' power and its relationship with productivity. A self-imposed boundary was clearly wished for the project. A boundary could be problematic and it has its limitations, yet it has the advantage of clearly chalking out the terrain of discourse. Unfortunately, in the case of the present volume, the boundary remains utterly vague. The result is the worst of consequences in such a scenario.

One has to be very cautious while using phrases like 'agrarian power'. Even in a narrow economic sense, such phrases are utterly vague, if one cares to remember that significant parts of rural India, especially in the eastern region, have also been 'moneyorder' economies for a long time (even if we choose to ignore other complex economic relationships between agrarian and non-agrarian sectors). To conclude this section, until the constitutive domain of power (in relation to the particular problematic) is thoroughly explored, any attempt at linking it up with another variable will not be very fruitful.

The other fundamental problem in this regard relates to the way the central problematic has been set. No serious attempt is made (except in a couple of contributions) to take into account the available theoretical frameworks, within which our discussion around power/productivity considerations could be conducted much better. We are referring to Marxian projects which, in a comprehensive fashion, link up the organisation of production, class structure, productivity considerations, etc.—in short, a model of the economy is located in the broader context of 'civil society'. I am strongly tempted to quote Pierre Villar—'The history business has one thing in common with selling soap powder: mere novelty in both can easily pass off as an innovation.' What Villar says of the 'history business' is applicable to the social sciences in general.

As we know, most of the contributors to the volume, explicitly or implicitly, recognise that there is no systematic relationship between power structures and changes in productivity. The general conclusion suggested by the volume is that the relationship between power and productivity is highly variable, 'complex, contextual and not easily captured in large generalisations'. To understand the changes in productivity, contributors to the volume emphasise various other variables: perceived opportunity structures, appropriate economic signals, State policies regarding pricing, credit, taxation, etc., ecological variables, the integration of village society with the national political economy, and so on. In such a state, isn't it appropriate to infer that, to examine changes in productivity, adequate frameworks, depending on the level of generality, are required to analytically capture the different contexts? Posing the question in terms of the power/productivity nexus is not a particularly useful way to begin such an enquiry.

This is not to question the importance of power considerations. On the contrary, it is to stress the obvious, that power relations are

embedded in all social relations, and hence influence the dynamics of change and transformation. We should also emphasise that we are not underplaying the importance of those arguments which highlight the role of economic power, derivative from differential access to means of production and related assets, while looking at the process of agrarian change. Marxists have done a lot of good work along these lines. Obvious examples are conventional land-centred models (most of which focus on the highly skewed distribution of holdings and associated production relations as the causal factor in depressing productivity in the short term, and marring the prospects for technological transformation and growth overtime), or the arguments relating to 'inter-linked agrarian markets' as institutional constraints on agricultural development. As is widely recognised, there is a great deal of truth in this scenario. The point emphasised here is that such arguments are best understood and appreciated (with significant qualification and elaboration at times), as part of wider frameworks. Amongst the contributors to the volume, Ronald Herring attempts to situate his arguments in one such comprehensive conceptual framework. Chakravarty, Rudra and Chaudhuri offer useful insights in this regard.

Those familiar with the exhaustive and extremely fruitful discussion around the 'transition from feudalism to capitalism' in Europe, would readily agree with the point made above. Since the volume's concern is with South Asia (standard euphemism for India!), we should note that there have been attempts at building and applying such comprehensive frameworks, within the Marxist tradition. Jan Breman's *Patronage and Exploitation* is one such example, amongst others.

By way of conclusion—the volume leaves us with a distinct feeling of dissatisfaction, much has been claimed, too little demonstrated. Although it is true that there are rich insights, useful discussions, interesting research programmes, and some of the contributions are of a high order in the task that they set for themselves, yet, the promises are never quite fulfilled. Pompous declarations do not really take us beyond long-found Americas!

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SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Employment in Indian Agriculture: Retrospect and
Prospect **Sheila Bhalla**

3

Employment Strategies Adopted in Wage Dependent
Households **Jeemol Unni**

22

Work Wealth and Health: Sociology of Workers' Health
in India **Imrana Qadeer & Duni Roy**

45

Note On Sociology in/of India: Toward a Discursive
Deviation **Sasheej Hegde**

93

Book Review

109

192-193

SOCIAL SCIENTIST

VOLUME 17

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Editorial

The tendency in certain circles to emphasise the still modest recovery in the rate of growth of the Indian economy since the late 1970s has deflected attention from many disconcerting features of recent economic performance. Besides the cost of that growth in terms of its impact on the balance of payments and the domestic price level, its most disturbing aspect is its failure to noticeably increase employment and real incomes and improve the quality of life among the lowest income deciles of the population. This issue of the *Social Scientist* includes three papers which, in different contexts, analyse the adverse fall-out of the strategy of growth being pursued on different sections of the labouring poor.

Sheila Bhalla, in her analysis of employment trends in the Indian economy in general and the agricultural sector in particular, focuses on the decline in the employment generating capacity of the pattern of growth being realised. Two features are of significance here. First, while a major explanation for the 'growth revival' of recent years is the increase in the rate of growth of the non-agricultural sectors, resulting in a dwindling share of agriculture in national income, the rate of growth of non-agricultural employment was less than a half of the rate of growth of non-agricultural output. As a result the number of people dependent on agriculture for their livelihood has risen at a rate much higher than the rate of growth of agricultural output.

However, agriculture's own capacity to accommodate these growing numbers has been constrained. While the possibilities of raising net sown area are declining, the ability to raise employment in agriculture through yield-increasing technologies, double cropping and shifts to labour intensive crops have been constrained *inter alia* by inadequate investments in irrigation, flood control and drainage. Further, the evidence indicates that the successful green revolution areas, which had hitherto contributed substantially to the growth in agricultural employment, are now moving in the direction of labour saving agricultural practices that are reducing the responsiveness of agricultural employment to increases in agricultural output. Thus, barring the new green revolution regions, the possibilities of employment growth in agriculture within the current path of development appear extremely limited.

2 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

In the net, while the pressure of population on land is resulting in fragmentation of operated area and, combined with the process of economic differentiation, in an increase in the share of wage-paid casual labour in total rural employment, the volume of employment available to these sections is not growing at anywhere near an adequate rate. This results in underemployment as well as a spill-over into low paid non-agricultural activities and reflects itself in a growing mass of casual wage employees, who form the bulk of the rural poor, with low per capita monthly expenditures and a high proportion below any poverty line.

Jeemol Unni's accompanying piece focuses on these households dependent on wage labour and the strategies they adopt to eke out even their woefully inadequate incomes. These strategies involve relying on female participation in wage work as well as on a wide range of activities as buffers when fluctuations in agricultural output render the primary incomes of the household inadequate to meet even a minimal target income. In fact, given the socially and historically determined limits to diversification of women's work, when choosing to allocate a part of household labour to earn additional incomes from wage labour, it is predominantly the women who turn to such work as their principal activity, while men continue to be engaged in the primary activity of the household and turn to wage labour only as a subsidiary activity. It is the net effect of survival strategies of this kind, in the face of a path of development that marginalises the poor, that shows up in indices of rising casualisation and increasing female participation.

For those who seek to escape from this vicious circle by migrating to urban centres in search of factory employment, the opportunities are by no means better. Imrana Qadeer and Dunu Roy show how, barring those from among middle and upper caste cultivators, who because of their skills and social links find permanent or temporary jobs in industry, the bulk of the migrant labour force has access only to contract or casual work. These workers not only work longer hours at lower wages, but are also 'selected', because of their lower bargaining power and organisational strength, to perform the most hazardous tasks in an industrial world that is seeing an increase in the share of hazardous activities on account of higher-speed machinery, use of new and unfamiliar technology and the intensification of work. This increase in the threat to the health status and life of the industrial worker, legislation to the contrary notwithstanding, is partly the inevitable fall-out of the large surplus workforce caught in the struggle for a decent wage, and yet unable to fight for a more congenial work environment and adequate social security.

It is this stagnation and even deterioration in the quality of life of the labouring poor, amidst the euphoria that high growth and pockets of affluence generate, that shows up the real character of the path of development being pursued—a character that assessments based on growth figures tend to conceal.

SHEILA BHALLA*

*Employment in Indian Agriculture:
Retrospect and Prospect***

INTRODUCTION

This paper starts from the premise that any Renaissance (Indian or otherwise) must be firmly grounded in objective realities, although it may take on the characteristics also of a revival of optimism among the mass of the people, and of renewed creativity in the realms of art and ideas. It needs to be remembered also that historically Renaissances have been based on the release of the constructive energies of hitherto subordinate classes. It is their ideas about the organisation or reorganisation of social and economic life and their leadership of and participation in the realisation of these ideas, which impart the quality of buoyancy to both intellectual and practical activity, which is the hallmark of the Renaissance of the past.

Consequently, I am going to address myself in this paper, to a very mundane problem, whose solution, or substantial amelioration, would provide the objective basis for greater participation in the economic and social life of the people of India, of the many who are now left behind. This is the problem of providing productive employment for all who seek it. I do not think that, in India, there is any possibility of a Renaissance, unless the 'bottom 40 per cent' are participants in it.

For the labour owning classes whose productive asset base is too small to support themselves in decency, and for those who have no productive assets at all except the capacity and will to work, participation for all practical purposes means employment. Moreover, for most people with an inadequate asset base or none at all in today's Indian context, work participation means not self employment, but paid employment as respectable hired workers in productive jobs. In this I do not include short term work on 'special employment programmes', or involvement in schemes peripheral to the production process such as

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IRDP. The people who are engaged under such programmes are there precisely because they are really unemployed. They should not therefore be counted among those for whom jobs have been generated in the course of the planned development of the Indian economy. What we should be interested in, rather, is the sources of employment growth which arise in the production processes in agriculture, in industry and in the provision of infrastructure services and other tertiary activities.

This paper is in three parts. Following this introduction, the second part, which discusses employment trends and changes in labour productivity, is presented in two sections: the first of these deals with contextual factors and constraints, such as the dwindling possibilities of extending net sown area, and the failure of the non-agricultural sectors to provide alternative non-agricultural employment on a large scale; this is followed by a review of the evidence on employment trends, provided by recent studies relating to both the agricultural and the non-agricultural sectors. The third part reports the results of a decomposition exercise, which produces estimates of the magnitude of employment generated in agriculture in recent years, through each of three causes: (i) labour intensity changes (changes in labour input per hectare), (ii) shifts in cropping patterns, and (iii) changes in gross cropped area.

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS AND CHANGES IN LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE

Contextual Factors and Constraints

Employment growth rates and labour productivity in agriculture are the product of many decisions, and these decisions are taken within a framework of a variety of constraints. Among the major ones are the following facts. The land available for utilisation in India is limited, at the national level it has not been possible yet to slow down the rate of population growth much, nor has the rate of growth of non-agricultural employment opportunities been sufficient to draw down the absolute numbers who are mainly dependent on the land for their livelihoods. Closer to home, at the regional and local levels, other factors define, within rather narrow limits, the range of possibilities open in the matter of labour deployment. These include agro-climatic conditions,¹ the distribution of land as between small and large holders, the quality of agricultural infrastructure,² and the input requirements of the technology packages which are locally most effective in increasing yields and/or reducing the costs of cultivation of the crop combinations suited to the area.

Let us examine first the capacity of the non-agricultural sectors of the Indian economy to absorb workers from the agricultural sector. Changes in the occupational structure in favour of manufacturing and other non-agricultural activities, are a well known characteristic of sustainable development processes. Normally the process is a slow one, partly because the initial output and employment base in the non-

agricultural sector is relatively small. Typically also, the output structure shifts first, and the occupational structure follows with a time lag. The Indian experience is revealed by the time series data in Tables 1 and 2.

What we see in the first table is the impact of output growth rates in the non-agricultural sector far in excess of agricultural output growth rates. But since the rate of growth of non-agricultural output is normally at least twice as large as the rate of growth of non-agricultural employment, even high rates of non-farm output growth failed to provide the required non-agricultural employment opportunities. Thus the absolute numbers engaged in agriculture continued to rise, in some regions at rates substantially above the rates of output growth in agriculture, with the result that labour productivity actually declined in these regions. (For details see Table 9.)

The failure of the non-farm sector to provide additional jobs on a larger scale would not have been so serious, had there been plenty of room to expand net sown area in the agricultural sector. But unfortunately for India's farm employment growth prospects, the possibilities of extending the area under cultivation declined rapidly after 1956. Figures are given in Table 3.

While in principle it is quite possible for the extension of double cropping to compensate for the dwindling possibilities of extending net sown area, in India this did not happen. Irrigation could not be extended fast enough. Thus the country gradually lost what had been the main source of its farm output and employment growth up until about 1965-66. Indian agriculture was thrown back on yield increases and the extension of double cropping as the major potential sources of employment growth. Cropping pattern shifts in favour of relatively more labour intensive crops emerged as a poor third in terms of its positive impact on employment growth in India as a whole.³

The limited opportunities for non-farm employment, together with the marked deceleration in the extension of net sown area, was reflected in the gradual worsening of land-man ratios, and the proliferation of sub-marginal uneconomic holdings. (See Tables 4 and 5.)

As is evident from comparison of the figures at the bottom of Table 5 for ownership and operational holdings, a large proportion of small owners do not find it worthwhile to cultivate their owned holdings. There are far fewer households *operating* small holdings than the number who own small holdings. As of 1981 according to the NSS⁴ most of the area leased out is accounted for either by agricultural labourer households (19.39 per cent at the all-India level) or by the category 'others' (46.26 per cent, again at the all-India, all size classes level). 'Others' constitutes a category which includes households self-employed in non-agricultural occupations, labour households having wage paid non-manual employment, and all other households.

Notwithstanding the large scale of leasing out the number of owners of sub-marginal holdings who actually operate them is tremendously large, and growing. In 1981, 56 per cent of all operational holdings were below 1 hectare. In 1961, the figure was only 39 per cent. These are holdings with little or no capacity to invest or to take risk, holdings which are commonly unable to support even their existing household members, who have, therefore, to seek supplementary employment and income, in addition to work on their own farms. Given that income and asset redistribution programmes do not work effectively in rural areas, and that there is now very little scope for redistributing land in any case, most of these people are going to be forced into wage paid work, much of it casual and in the unorganised sector. Recent NSS data shows that this is, in fact, what has been happening. In general, the rate of growth of casual wage labour has been higher than the rate of growth of wage labour as a whole (both in agriculture and in non-agriculture), and the rate of growth of self employment has been, by comparison with these rates (and with the rate of growth of population), low.⁵ Moreover, most of those now working in non-agricultural jobs in India, are employed in rural areas. This is true for both the self-employed and 'usually employed' categories. In 1983, 'Only for regularly employed employees was the number of urban non-agricultural workers larger than the corresponding rural number', and 'the bulk of this latter set is in the organised sector'. Thus most unorganised workers are rural workers, not only in agriculture, but also in non-agriculture.⁶

Qualitatively, this adds up to a serious deterioration in the structure of the rural labour force. Sen (1988) finds that in both rural and urban areas, casual wage employees are the poorest class of workers. 'They had the lowest per capita monthly consumption expenditure and the highest proportion of persons below any given poverty line among all workers'. These workers were the only workers with significant unemployment.⁷ At the other end of the scale, permanent employees are 'better off than the self-employed, agricultural or non-agricultural'. Clearly the occupational shift out of agriculture, especially in rural areas, leaves much to be desired. Much of this work is intermittent and not very productive and appears to be as much the result of 'push factors' as of 'pull factors' arising consequent upon the creation of superior job opportunities, as alternatives to low productivity agricultural work.

The change in strength of the 'pull factors' (if any) can be judged at least roughly, by the direction of change in the magnitudes of the employment elasticities for the non-agricultural sectors of the economy. Papola's work⁸ shows a decline in employment elasticities in manufacturing, however measured. Using data from the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) sector (Census plus sample), he derives four sets of declining elasticities as shown in Table 6. In subsequent work, based on NSS weekly status employment data, and corresponding national income statistics, declining employment elasticities for the economy as

a whole, and for many of its non-agricultural sub-sectors, emerge. The much higher employment elasticities of 'unregistered manufacturing' as compared to 'registered', confirms the observations made earlier, about relative rates of growth of employment in the unorganised and organised sectors generally, and in rural areas in particular

As Papola himself writes, 'whichever indicator is considered, it is clear that the employment generating capacity of output growth has declined during the period under reference, particularly sharply in recent years'⁹ Clearly, output growth rates in the non-agricultural sectors will have to be raised substantially, if the incipient occupational shift out of agriculture is to be accelerated sufficiently to relieve the population pressure on the land

What lies behind the observed decline in labour absorption per additional unit of non-farm output?

Papola's study of the manufacturing sector concludes that the 'slower growth in employment than in output was mainly caused by technological change within individual industry groups, and structural changes as such had only a marginal contribution'.¹⁰ By structural change, in this context, is meant an increase (or decline) in the relative importance of industries where the labour absorption per unit of output is high (or low) This is the industrial counterpart of the cropping pattern shifts in favour of crops which require relatively more labour per hectare, discussed in the last section of this paper

OUTPUT GROWTH, TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE AND LABOUR ABSORPTION IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE

All relatively recent studies suggest that the labour absorptive capacity of agriculture (with respect to output growth and to yields), was relatively high¹¹ and possibly rising from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies but that it declined rapidly thereafter A 'resumé' of the results, data base and methodology of some of these studies is given in tabular form as Appendix 1 at the end of this paper

The expansionary phase in labour absorption in Indian agriculture, (up to the mid-1970s), was associated with the introduction of a biochemical technology characterised by the extension of irrigation, including tubewell irrigation, the use of HYV seeds and fertilisers, on a large scale in Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh, and to a limited extent elsewhere Subsequently, although the high output growth rate scenario extended dramatically to fresh areas (most notably to east U P, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra), the states which had pioneered in the introduction of the 'Green Revolution' technology experienced declines in per hectare labour absorption Moreover, for some crops, most notably wheat, negative employment elasticities appeared almost everywhere

The geographical spread of the 'high output growth' regime is summarised in Table 8 in terms of the number of districts involved and the percent of GCA covered

A comprehensive overview of related data on employment, labour productivity and output growth rates at the state level is given for 13 states in Table 9

This table reveals that of the six states which are conspicuous for having had production growth rates in excess of 3 per cent over the past ten to fifteen years, three have now clearly shifted over to 'labour saving' technologies to increase yields and output, while three others have been adopting 'labour using' technologies¹²

The first set consists of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, the pioneers in the adoption of 'Green Revolution' technology in India. The second set includes Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra which are relative newcomers to the 'high growth' club. These six high growth states, it is worth noting, are the only states which have enjoyed substantial improvements in per worker productivity.

Time series data however reveals that in the first three states, labour absorption in fact followed an inverted-U shaped path. The initial response to the 'Green Revolution' technology was a sustained rise in labour use per hectare. This trend characteristically peaked in the mid-seventies or shortly afterwards, and subsequent increases in yield were associated with a contraction in man days employment per hectare, in the case of most crops.

Nevertheless, in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, it has been possible to sustain or enhance existing levels of total employment in field crop agriculture because of the expansion of grass cropped area, together with shifts or area in favour of relatively more labour intensive crops. Since the technological changes which have taken place in these three states have made it possible to improve both labour and land productivity substantially they must be counted as part of a set of positively constructive developments.

In the second set of high output growth states, labour absorption graphs follow a distinctive, and apparently continuous upward trend, generating very high rates of growth in both employment and labour productivity—for the time being at least, the best of all possible worlds.

The remaining seven states are all characterised by relatively low rates of output growth together with slow or no growth in labour productivity. In Bihar and West Bengal, in fact, the rate of growth in labour productivity is negative.

A striking feature which emerges from the comparison of NSS and Cost of Production data (in Table 9), is that the identification of states afflicted with very low or negative rates of growth in employment is roughly the same. The notable exception is Bihar, for which NSS figures suggest an improvement for the shorter period from 1972-73 to 1977-78. Again there are two sets of states involved. One set includes all the high output growth, labour saving technology states—Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. The other covers four of the states where output growth has been relatively low.

When this evidence, is combined with state level data on employment elasticities and yield growth rates for ten major crops, a clear basis emerges for identifying the four states at the bottom of Table 9, as areas of 'agricultural involution' ¹³ The elasticity figures for paddy and wheat are given in Table 10.

High employment elasticities, when they appear for states with negligible long term yield growth rates, can be treated as evidence of agricultural involution. In Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal in particular, labour inputs per hectare have increased despite long-term stagnation in yields. In West Bengal and Bihar, this was associated with both declining productivity of labour in agriculture generally, and fewer days work per agricultural worker. In Tamil Nadu, negligible growth rates in labour productivity (see Table 9) were combined with an unambiguous fall in labour days available per worker. Since detailed district-wise data¹⁴ indicates output growth rates well below population growth rates in all eleven districts of Tamil Nadu, this state is classed along with Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar, as belonging to a region characterised by agricultural involution.

On the basis of output and employment related data, therefore, four distinct sets of states can be defined. The first is the high growth, labour saving technology region, comprising Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. In these states there is reason to think that economies of scale in agricultural production generally have emerged ¹⁵ The second set is a high growth, labour using technology region covering Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Karnataka, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh constitute a third group with mixed characteristics—Karnataka because it has some very high growth, labour absorbing sub-regions (growing cotton), and some districts suffering growth rates below the rate of population expansion. Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, on the other hand, have both adopted labour saving technologies for several crops, have negative employment elasticities for wheat, and at the same time exhibit very low overall rates of growth in labour productivity. In both states also, the number of days employment available per worker has gone down. In the present state of science and technology, significant but unrealised potential for accelerated development in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh does not appear to exist. The fourth region which is the area of agricultural involution is a region rich in unexploited water resources, and includes some of the most densely populated areas of the country.

SOURCES OF EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN INDIAN FIELD CROP AGRICULTURE

This section reports the results of an attempt to quantify the sources of employment growth in field crop agriculture over the period spanned by the triennium 1971-72, 1972-73 and 1973-74 to the triennium 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84.

The exercise was carried out at three levels. In ascending order of aggregation, they are.

- (i) at the level of individual crops in each of 13 states separately,
- (ii) at the level of 'all crops' in each state separately; and finally
- (iii) at the all-India level for all crops combined

The details of the methodology and the number of crops covered in each state are presented as Appendix 2, to this paper. The results of the exercise are reported in descending order of aggregation, starting at the 'all-India' 'all crops' level in Table 11. The figures given in this table as in subsequent ones are in thousands of man days, unless otherwise specified (The crop level results are not given in the paper)

At the all-India level, it appears that labour intensity changes are the dominant source of employment growth, that increases in GCA are of secondary importance, and that changes in cropping patterns have made a positive contribution of a much lower order. This can be compared to what has happened in industry. There also 'structural changes' (defined as shifts in the relative importance of different segments of industry) did not have much impact on employment levels in recent years, because the employment effects of such shifts are negative in some industries and positive in others.

At the state level, the cropping pattern shift effect is in fact negative, for all crops combined in 5 states out of 13 for which sufficient data was available. Not only that. In 3 out of 4 of the agricultural involution states, changes in GCA had a negative impact on employment. In Bihar and Tamil Nadu, the depressing effect on employment of declines in GCA was substantial. Moreover, these are the states where employment also declines in response to cropping pattern shifts. The only thing that 'saves' the employment picture in Orissa, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Bihar is apparently the large increase in employment attributable to changes in labour use per hectare (i.e. changes in labour intensity). But in these four states much of this is a 'spurious' increase in labour intensity. It is not in response to the requirements of increases in yield (output per hectare).

Moreover, it may be noted that the increase in labour intensity in these four states alone accounts for roughly 45 per cent¹⁶ of all employment gains attributable to changes in labour intensity at the all-India level. This suggests that in planning for *healthy* employment expansion in agriculture, the greatest emphasis has got to be placed on the extension of double cropping. Such increases in GCA can only be achieved by accelerated investment, in irrigation in particular.

In future, the figures for Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh indicate that reliance on GCA extension is likely to become more and more essential, as high output growth regions shift (as they eventually will) from 'labour using' to 'labour displacing' technological packages.

Since the outlook is for declining elasticities of employment with respect to production in Indian agriculture generally, the importance of

investment in the creation of productive jobs outside agriculture, will also become increasingly urgent.

Table - 1
Share of Agriculture in Gross Domestic Product

Year	1950-51	1955-55	1960-61	1964-65 ³	1970-71	1975-76	1980-81	1985-86 ⁴
Share of agriculture ¹ in GDP at Constant Prices ²	59.61	58.09	55.13	50.85	48.46	46.48	41.59	35.77

Notes 1 Includes, besides agriculture, forestry and logging, fishing, mining and quarrying. These other activities account for between 1 and 2 per cent of total GDP.
2 Constant 1970-71 prices except for 1985-86 which belongs to a 'new series' at 1980-81 prices.
3 Since agricultural output was reduced in 1965-66 by severe drought, 1964-65 figures give a more correct picture of trends.
4 The figures are provisional and may be below trend.

Source *Economic Survey 1987-88*, Government of India, Ministry of Finance, Table 1.3 GDP at factor cost by Industry of Origin.

Table - 2
Share of Agriculture in the Work Force NSS and Population Census 1959-60 to 1983

Year	1960-61	1961	1964-65	1971	1972-73	1977-78	1981	1983
1 NSS weekly activity status								
a) Rural males	80.3		78.5		80.9	78.0		75.6
b) Rural females	86.3		83.2		85.8	83.7		78.5
2 NSS usual status								
a) Rural males					83.23	80.6		76.80
b) Rural females					89.67	88.10		86.73
3 NSS current daily status								
a) Rural males						78.15		73.29
b) Rural females						82.23		79.07
4 Census of India								
a) Male cultivators		50.91		45.73			43.77	
b) Male agricultural labourers		13.13		21.71			19.77	
c) Male agricultural workers(a + b)		64.70		67.44			63.54	

Sources: NSS weekly status: Abhijit Sen, 'A Note on Employment and Living Standards in the Unorganised Sector', Table 1, *Social Scientist*, Feb 1988.
NSS usual and current daily status: Government of India, Planning Commission, *Seventh Five Year Plan 1985-90, Mid Term Appraisal*, Table 2.3, p. 32.
Census of India '1981' series 1, India Paper 3 of 1981, 'Provisional Population Totals, Workers and Non workers', Tables 2 and 3.

Table - 3
Changes in Net Sown Area, Area Sown More Than Once, and Gross Cropped Area,
and Gross Irrigated Area as Per Cent of Gross Cropped Area

	Average Annual Change in (000 hectares)			Average Gross Irrigated Area as per cent of Average Gross Cropped Area
	Net Sown Area	Area Sown More than Once	Gross Cropped Area	
(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1950-51 to 1955-56	+ 2082.0 (65.51)	+ 1002.0 (32.49)	+ 3084.0 (100)	17.21
1955-56 to 1965-66	+ 704.0 (88.33)	+ 93.0 (11.67)	+ 797.0 (100)	18.47
1965-66 to 1975-76	+ 537.0 (33.52)	+ 1065.0 (66.48)	+ 1602.0 (100)	23.12
1975-76 to 1983-84	+ 146.3 (12.92)	+ 986.3 (87.09)	+ 1132.5 (100)	28.43

Note: Figures in brackets are as per cent of Gross Cropped Area

Table 4
Land-Man* Ratios by State

State		Land - Man Ratios	
		1971	1981
1	Punjab	1.66	1.50
2	Haryana	2.14	1.82
3	Uttar Pradesh	0.92	0.81
4	Andhra Pradesh	1.41	1.18
5	Gujarat	2.09	1.85
6	Maharashtra	2.25	2.07
7	Karnataka	1.93	1.66
8	Rajasthan	2.84	2.35
9	Madhya Pradesh	2.09	1.83
10	Orissa	1.28	1.14
11	Tamil Nadu	0.90	0.84
12	West Bengal	0.84	0.69
13	Bihar	0.70	0.62
All-India		1.44	1.24

* Land - Man ratios are deferred as Net Sown Area (in hectares) divided by Total Male Agricultural Workers (cultivators plus agricultural labourers)

Table 5
Size, Structure of Ownership and Operational Holdings by State, 1961-62, 1971-72 and 1981-82

	Ownership Holdings			Operational Holdings														
	Less than 1 01 hect	1 to 2 02 hect	Above 2 02 hect	Less than 1 01 hect	1 to 2 02 hect	Above 2 02 hect												
	1961-62	1971-72	1982	1961-62	1971-72	1981-82												
Punjab*	61 43	67 50	66 87	9 22	8 37	10 08	29 35	24 13	23 05	23 42	11 71	59 02	14 20	19 06	10 39	62 38	69 23	30 59
Haryana*	-	63 90	56 84	-	8 95	15 49	-	27 15	27 67	-	17 48	42 22	-	17 54	12 74	-	64 98	45 04
U P	57 47	65 58	67 96	21 39	18 60	17 38	24 14	15 82	14 66	43 33	49 78	59 60	26 54	26 92	21 58	30 13	23 30	18 82
A.P	66 32	65 30	67 49	11 45	13 65	14 03	22 22	13 65	18 48	41 90	47 29	48 64	18 59	19 14	22 13	39 51	35 57	29 23
Gujarat	48 81	52 25	57 25	11 05	15 24	13 61	40 14	31 51	29 14	19 76	27 19	38 83	15 80	20 70	20 38	64 44	52 11	40 99
Mahara- shtra	50 26	48 36	54 89	11 41	14 94	14 96	58 33	36 70	30 15	23 56	23 71	35 26	18 04	21 74	19 47	58 40	54 55	45 27
Karnataka	46 54	50 94	54 41	12 92	16 27	16 82	40 54	32 79	28 77	20 55	28 76	38 90	17 45	22 81	22 53	62 00	48 43	39 07
Rajasthan	29 26	26 96	37 08	15 46	19 87	16 23	55 28	53 17	46 69	16 03	31 00	30 53	17 71	16 40	17 48	66 26	52 60	51 99
M P	40 42	40 26	48 77	15 42	16 96	16 24	44 16	42 78	34 99	21 72	26 11	32 94	19 34	20 29	22 51	52 94	53 60	44 55
Orissa	62 67	68 94	66 06	17 24	18 08	20 84	20 09	12 98	13 10	39 35	54 52	54 45	28 85	25 78	26 11	31 85	19 70	19 44
Tamil Nadu	78 42	73 13	81 85	11 07	11 39	10 89	10 51	15 48	7 26	32 44	60 06	71 37	24 47	21 26	16 72	23 09	18 68	11 91
West Bengal	19 25	77 62	81 60	16 81	12 64	11 50	3 94	9 74	6 90	44 98	61 21	74 34	29 73	22 80	15 83	25 29	15 99	9 83
Bihar	18 08	71 71	76 65	15 83	15 11	12 42	6 09	13 18	10 93	54 38	58 86	68 70	22 89	23 32	17 61	22 23	17 82	13 69
All	60 06	62 62	66 64	15 16	15 49	14 70	24 78	21 89	18 66	39 07	45 77	56 00	22 62	23 38	19 32	38 31	31 85	24 68

* Punjab includes Haryana in 1961-62

Sources Table VII, pp 24-25, NSS Report 330, and

Table VI, pp 24-25, NSS Report 331

Table - 6
Employment Elasticities in Manufacturing 1968-75 to 1980-84

Period	With respect to growth of value of output at constant prices		With respect to value added at constant prices	
	E/O	W/O	E/VA	W/VA
1968-75	0.547	0.392	0.508	0.364
1975-84	0.348	0.387	0.463	0.512
1980-84	-0.006	0.277	-0.006	0.276
1968-84	0.422	0.384	0.483	0.442

Note E = Growth in number of employees
W = Growth in number of production process workers only
O = Growth in value of output at constant prices
VA = Growth in value added at constant prices

Source TS Papola, *Restructuring in Indian Industry Implications for Employment and Industrial Relations*, A study prepared for ILO-ARTEP, New Delhi, 1988

Table - 7
Employment Elasticities with Respect to Value Added
Specified Sectors of the Economy 1972 to 1983

Sector	1972-73 to 1977-78	1977-78 to 1982-83	1972 to 1983
All Sectors	0.51	0.41	0.47
Mining & Quarrying	1.00	0.75	0.96
Manufacturing of which	0.80	0.61	0.68
(a) Unregistered			0.75
(b) Registered			0.28
Trade	0.95	0.60	0.86
Transport	0.63	1.01	0.93
Services	0.43	0.49	0.46
Agriculture & Allied	0.40	0.28	0.35

Source TS Papola

Table 8
Annual Compound Growth Rates of Agricultural Output in India
District Level Data for 1962-65 to 1972-73 and 1970-73 to 1980-83,
and Percentage of GCA Covered as at 1970-73 and 1980-83

Growth Rate (%)	Number of Districts		Per cent of GCA as at	
	1962-65 to 1970-73	1970-73 to 1980-83	1970-73	1980-83
Above 3.5	71	95	26.08	39.42
2.5 to 3.5	37	36	12.38	9.98
1.5 to 2.5	45	45	14.22	14.69
Below 1.5	131	108	47.32	35.91

Source GS Bhalla and DS Tyagi, District-wise analysis of Agricultural Performance in India, preliminary results

Table - 9
Trend Rates of Growth in Production, Labour Productivity and Employment
by State 1971-72 to 1983-84

States	Trend Rates of Growth in					
	Production (49 crops)	Gross Cropped Area under all crops	Labour Productivity	Employment (man days) Per Hectare	Total	Per cent Change in person days employment 1977-78 over 1972-73 (NSS)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1 Punjab	3 92	2 002c	2 63	-0 887a	1 079a	-2
2 Haryana	3 31	0 589	1 47	-0 357	0 230	-11
3 Uttar Pradesh	3 09	0 743c	1 72	-0 145	0 598	-6
4 Andhra Pradesh	3 31	0 571	1 78	2 779c	3 663c	12
5 Gujarat	3 92	0 371	2 38	3 191c	3 574c	14
6 Maharashtra	5 60	1 676a	4 44	1 730c	3 435c	30
7 Karnataka	2 44	1 114	0 75	1 483c	2 614c	9
8 Rajasthan	2 47	0 659	0 97	0 737	1 393	-9
9 Madhya Pradesh	1 65	0 972c	0 03	-0 976	-0 014	-1
10 Orissa	2 26	0 531	1 15	0 795	1 331b	4
11 Tamil Nadu	1 12	-1 457a	0 26	0 960a	-0 510	-13
12 West Bengal	0 91	0 057	-0 59	2 096c	2 037a	10
13 Bihar	0 49	-0 954	-0 68	1 037	0 074	8

Sources & Notes

- (1) Col 1 Trend growth rates in production for 49 crops were computed using indices of agricultural production for each state. The indices were prepared by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, and the data presented in G S Bhalla, 'Some Issues in Agricultural Development in India: An Overview', Table 3, in P R Brahmananda & V R Panchamukhi (eds), *The Development Process and the Indian Economy*, Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, 1987
- (2) Col 2 Source 'Estimates of Area and Production of Principal Crops', Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, GOI. Gross Cropped Area under all crops relates to the 18 or fewer crops covered by the cost of production data
- (3) Col 3 Derived from data presented in G S Bhalla, op cit, Table 5, p 248
- (4) Col 4,5 Computed from data gathered under the comprehensive scheme for studying the cost of cultivation of principal crops, for 18 crops, or fewer where data was available for a smaller number of crops only
- (5) a, b and c in columns 2, 4 and 5 indicate T-Values significant at the following levels: a-95 per cent, b-98 per cent, c-99 per cent
- (6) Source Col (6), Table 12 in A Vaidyanathan, 'Labour Use in Rural India: A Study of Spatial and Temporal Variations', in *EPW Review of Agriculture*, 27, Dec 1986

Table - 10
Per Hectare Employment Elasticities with respect to Yield for
Paddy and Wheat by State 1971-72 to 1983-84
(Trend growth rate in man-days per hectare trend growth rate in yield)

Crop	Ranked Negative Elasticities		Low Positive Elasticities		High Positive Elasticities		Involution Elasticities	
	State	Elasticity (Yield growth rate)	State	Elasticity (Yield growth rate)	State	Elasticity (Yield growth rate)	State	Elasticity (Yield growth rate)
1 Paddy	Haryana	0.393 (5.04)	Karnataka	0.251 (1.14)	Tamilnadu	0.904 (1.73)	West Bengal	5.599 (0.47)
	Punjab	0.390 (6.04)	Gujarat	0.273	A P	0.310 (4.63) (2.60)	Orissa	23.722 (0.09)
	U P	0.368 (2.23)	Maharashtra	0.329 (3.84)			Bihar	28.049 (0.04)
2 Wheat	Rajasthan	1.194 (2.78)	None	None	Bihar	0.809 (1.89)	West Bengal	1.372 (0.33)
	Haryana	0.953 (1.97)						
	Punjab	0.890 (2.50)						
	MP	0.592 (1.97)						
	U P	0.488 (2.42)						
	Gujarat	0.431 (3.04)						

Table 11
Employment and Employment Growth in Indian Agriculture
By Source 1971-72 to 1973-74 to 1981-82 to 1983-84

Description	Employment in Mandays (000)	As Per cent of Increase in Employment	As Per cent of Total Employment
1 Total field crop employment (Triennium commencing 1981)	11,250,258.01		100.00
2 Increase in employment (Triennium commencing 1981 over triennium commencing 1971)	1,628,679.16	100.00	14.48
3 Increase in employment by source			
(a) Due to labour intensity change	851,314.89	52.27	7.57
(b) Due to cropping pattern shifts	145,874.79	8.96	1.30
(c) Due to change in gross cropped area under the crops	631,489.48	38.77	5.61

Table 12
Decomposition of Total Employment Change into Labour Intensity Change,
Change due to Cropping Pattern Shifts, and the Impact of Changes in Gross
Cropped Area by State—Triennium 1971-74 to Triennium 1981-84

State	Total Employ- ment change (000 mandays)	Due to Labour Intensity change	Due to cropping pattern shifts (000 mandays)	Due to changes Gross Cropped Area (000 mandays)
1 Punjab	+ 41,732 31	- 55838 33	+ 27384 09	+ 70186 55
2 Haryana	+ 4,108 56	- 31603 43	+ 1793 67	+ 34008 32
3 Uttar Pradesh	+ 106,752 44	- 86793 13	+ 47492 65	+ 146052 92
4 Andhra Pradesh	+ 321,018 44	+ 202669 08	+ 61498 15	+ 56851 21
5 Gujarat	+ 214,747 83	+ 220768 06	- 34870 00	+ 28849 71
6 Maharashtra	+ 418,414 31	+ 187630 87	+ 16725 73	+ 214057 71
7 Karnataka	+ 189,380 53	+ 88192 81	+ 38045 81	+ 63141 91
8 Rajasthan	+ 77,399 97	+ 22369 77	+ 18580 09	+ 36450 11
9 Madhya Pradesh	+ 6,202 42	- 84297 00	- 1893 51	+ 92392 93
10 Orissa	+ 82,613 31	+ 87782 15	- 36401 52	+ 31232 68
11 Tamil Nadu	- 17,667 53	+ 77338 96	- 2956 97	- 92049 52*
12 West Bengal	+ 177,471 38	+ 176200 40	+ 9852 72	- 8581 74*
13 Bihar	+ 6,415 19	+ 46894 68	- 1410 75	- 39068 74*

* Trend rates of growth in GCA, for all crops when intervening, years (between the triennia) are also taken into account, are also negative in Bihar (-0.954) and in Tamil Nadu (-1.457) with t - value significant at the 95 per cent level, but positive (0.057) with t - value not significant in the case of West Bengal

APPENDIX I

Resume of Recent Employment Elasticity Studies

Author and Date of Publication	Reference Periods	Elasticity Estimates	Comments on Data Base and Methodology
G S Bhalla & D S Tyagi (1988)	Triennium ending 1964-65	0.636	Cross Section data, 281 districts—19 crops
	Triennium ending 1972-73	0.655	Growth of male workers (Census) divided by growth in value of output per hectare, i.e., 'elasticity of male workers with respect to yield'
	Triennium ending 1982-83	0.566	
PPD, Planning Commission, GOI (1977)	1972-73	-0.973	Elasticity of employment with respect to yield
	(first 2 sub- rounds of NSS 27th Round)	-0.673	Elasticity of employment respect to production Cross Section data, 53 NSS regions for employment Area and output data from JNU- PPD study on district wise growth for 19 crops

C H Hanumantha (1977)	Early 1970s	0.75	Elasticity of employment Rao with respect to output. Case studies, basis for generalisation to all-India level not specified
D S Tyagi (1981)	Triennium ending 1970-71 to Triennium ending 1978-79	0.6624 0.769	Elasticity of employment with respect to yield. Elasticity of employment with respect to production Time Series for two groups of states. Employment data from comprehensive scheme for studying the cost of cultivation. Production based on an agricultural production index for 8 crops Crop-wise elasticities also calculated. Elasticity defined as per cent change in labour absorption divided by per cent change in yield level
Sheila Bhalla (1987)	1971-72 to 1983-84	0.5945	Elasticity of employment with respect to production Crop-wise elasticities with respect to yield also calculated. Time Series data. Trend rates of growth in employment divided by trend rates of growth in production/yield. Employment data for 18 crops, statewide, from comprehensive scheme
T S Papola (1988)	1972-73 to 1977-78	0.40	Time Series data. NSS weekly status sectorwise employment data and corresponding national accounts statistics
	1977-78 to 1982-83	0.23	
	1972 to 1983	0.35	Elasticity of employment with respect to value added

APPENDIX 2

Data Base and Methodology for the Decomposition of Changes in Field Crop Employment

I Data base

The data comes from two sources, both of the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture, Directorate of Economics and Statistics

- (a) *On employment*, statewide data, for each of 18 crops separately, available from the *Comprehensive Scheme for Studying Cost of the Cultivation/Production of Principal Crops*

- (b) *On area*, statewise and cropwise data from *Estimates of Area and Production of Principal Crops*. The sum of the area under each of the crops covered is defined as *Gross Cropped Area (GCA)* for purposes of this exercise
- (c) In the tables derived from the decomposition exercise, the 13 states are grouped into four sets, as set out below. The number of crops for which employment data were available in each of these states is also shown below

Set Description	State	Number of crops covered
High output growth, low employment growth, high labour productivity growth	1 Punjab 2 Haryana 3 Uttar Pradesh	14 14 17
High output growth, high employment growth, high labour productivity growth	4 Andhra Pradesh 5 Gujarat 6 Maharashtra	15 13 15
Mediocre output growth, low or negative employment growth, low labour productivity growth	7 Karnataka 8 Rajasthan 9 Madhya Pradesh	14 14 15
Low to very low output growth, with rising employment per hectare, low or negative labour productivity growth, a combination described as the <i>Agricultural Involution</i> case	10 Orissa 11 Tamil Nadu 12 West Bengal 13 Bihar	14 14 15 16

II Methodology for the decomposition of changes in field crop employment

To identify the sources of employment growth, for each crop, for each state, and for all crops combined at the 'all India' level as well as for each state, a decomposition exercise was done in three stages

- A *In the case of individual crops in a particular state, into*
- (i) labour intensity change effect, and
 - (ii) area change effect
- B *In the case of 'all crops' in a particular state, into*
- (i) labour intensity change effect,
 - (ii) gross cropped area (GCA) change effect, and
 - (iii) cropping pattern change effect
- C *At the 'all-India' level, for 'all crops' combined into*
- (i) labour intensity change effect
 - (ii) GCA change effect, and
 - (iii) cropping pattern change effect

The years over which the employment changes are measured run from the triennium 1971-72, 1972-73, and 1973-74 to the triennium 1981-82, 1982-83, and 1983-84. 'Period 1' refers to the first triennium, 'period 2' to the second triennium. Details of the exercise are below

Let A_{ijt} be the Area under the j th crop in state i during period t
 and L_{ijt} be labour use per hectare in cultivation of crop j in state i during period t

Then,

Stage	Step	
A	1	The change in total labour use in the case of crop j in state i is
		$(A_{ij2} \times L_{ij2}) - (A_{ij1} \times L_{ij1})$

(1)

20 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

- 2 Of this, the change in employment attributable to a change in labour intensity is

$$(L_{1j2} - L_{1j1}) \times A_{1j1} \quad (2)$$

- 3 and the change due to a change in area under crop j in state i is

$$\begin{aligned} (A_{1j2} \times L_{1j2}) - (A_{1j1} \times L_{1j1}) - [(L_{1j2} - L_{1j1}) \times A_{1j1}] \\ = L_{1j2} (A_{1j2} - A_{1j1}) \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

- B 4 For 'all crops' in state i, the change in employment attributable to a change in labour intensity is

$$\sum_{j=1}^n (L_{1j2} - L_{1j1}) \times A_{1j1} \quad (4)$$

- 5 The change in labour absorption in all crops due to area changes is

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{j=1}^n (A_{1j2} \times L_{1j2}) - (A_{1j1} \times L_{1j1}) - [(L_{1j2} - L_{1j1}) \times A_{1j1}] \\ = \sum_{j=1}^n L_{1j2} (A_{1j2} - A_{1j1}) \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

But this effect of undifferentiated area change is the combined outcome of (a) changes in cropping patterns, and (b) changes in gross cropped area under the n crops

- 6 Of this effect of 'undifferentiated area change' on employment, the change in labour use attributable to a change in GCA is

$$\sum_{j=1}^n A_{1j2} \times L_{1j2} - \left[\sum_{j=1}^n (L_{1j2} \times A_{1j2}) / \sum_{j=1}^n A_{1j2} \right] \times \sum_{j=1}^n A_{1j1} \quad (6)$$

- 7 Of the undifferentiated area change effect, the remainder, which is the change in employment attributable to changes in cropping patterns is

$$(5) - (6) \quad (7)$$

- C 8 At the all-India level, for all crops in all 13 states, the change in employment attributable to changes in labour intensity, is

$$\sum_{i=1}^{13} \sum_{j=1}^n (L_{1j2} - L_{1j1}) \times A_{1j1} \quad (8)$$

- 9 Similarly, the all India, change in labour use due to changes in GCA is

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{i=1}^{13} \sum_{j=1}^n A_{1j2} \times L_{1j2} - \sum_{i=1}^{13} \left[\left(\sum_{j=1}^n L_{1j2} \times \sum_{j=1}^n A_{1j2} \right) / \sum_{j=1}^n A_{1j2} \right] \\ \times \sum_{j=1}^n A_{1j1} \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

- 10 And the all India change in labour use due to changes in cropping patterns is

$$\sum_{i=1}^{13} \sum_{j=1}^n L_{ij2} (A_{ij2} - A_{ij1}) \quad \text{--- (9) above} \quad (10)$$

(Thanks are due to D S Tyagi who checked the methodology described above, and devised the notation appropriate for it)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 For example soil type, terrain, height above sea level, the amount of rainfall annually and its seasonal distribution
- 2 Including market roads, public major, medium and minor irrigation works, the extent of rural electrification, and the degree of development of local credit, input supply and equipment repair facilities
- 3 Also in all regions except those where negative employment elasticities with respect to yield are recorded for the period 1970-71 to 1983-84 See Section III of this paper for details
- 4 See *NSS Report No 330*, page 28
- 5 For a detailed discussion see Abhijit Sen, 'A Note on Employment and Living Standards in the Unorganised Sector', *Social Scientist*, Feb 1988
- 6 The findings quoted or cited in the second half of this paragraph are all from Abhijit Sen, op cit
- 7 Abhijit Sen, op cit
- 8 T S Papola, 'Restructuring in Indian Industry Implications for Employment and Industrial Relations', (A study prepared for ILO-ARTEP), New Delhi, 1988
- 9 T S Papola, op cit p 22
- 10 T S Papola, op cit p 25
- 11 There were some early studies, which generated elasticities as low as 0.3, but for that period, as the ICSSR working group headed by Sukhomoy Chakaravarty put it 'It cannot be 0.3 because with agricultural output growth rate of 2.7 (1950-71) per cent, it yields the employment growth rate of 0.71 per cent per annum', whereas the impact of growth of area under cultivation alone (including all positive changes in employment due to technology, crop mix changes and land relations effects), should have generated 'a floor rate of 1.2 per cent per annum' (Report of the ICSSR Working Group on *Alternatives in Agricultural Development*, mimeo, p 37, July 1978, later published by Allied Publishers as *Alternatives in Agricultural Development*, New Delhi, 1980 The possibility of per hectare labour absorption falling for a wide range of crops did not apply during the period referred to
- 12 The terms 'technologies' and 'technological change' are used here loosely What is observed is the choice of a yield-improving package of inputs commonly involving changes in pre-existing factor proportions, in which both relative price considerations and technological possibilities have played a role
- 13 The term was first applied to this kind of situation by Clifford Geertz See C Geertz, 'Agricultural Involution, the Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia', in Richard Jolly et al (eds), *Third World Employment Problems & Strategy*, Penguin, 1973
- 14 G S Bhalla and D S Tyagi, *District Wise Analysis of Agricultural Performance in India*, preliminary results (1988)
- 15 Satya Paul, for example, using FMS data, found that wheat growers in Ferozepur enjoy economies of scale See Satya Paul, 'A Cost Function Analysis of Wheat Production in India', *European Review of Agricultural Economics*, Vol 14(2), 1987 See also G K Chadha, 'Farm Size and Productivity Revisited Some Notes from Recent Experience of Punjab', *EPW Review of Agriculture*, 30 Sept 1978
- 16 388,216 19 thousand mandays out of an all-India total of 851,314 89 attributable to changes in labour intensity

JEEMOL UNNI*

*Employment Strategies Adopted in Wage Dependent Households***

There is considerable differentiation among rural households in India with a substantial growth of landless households and cultivator households with small holdings. Any study of the rural economy in terms of land, labour, credit or output markets has to take account of this differentiation. It is possible to divide the households into class categories depending upon their access to land and other assets and the amount of surplus they produce. During the course of capitalist development, changes in the labour process resulting from technological progress have a direct impact on employment. The overall impact of these changes is reflected in the distribution of surplus in the economy which leads to further differentiation among the rural households.

If one accepts this broad framework to analyse the rural economy the household appears to be the more relevant unit of study as opposed to the individual. Moreover, the decisions with regard to participation in economic activities take place at the household level. However, the household itself cannot be treated in isolation, it has to be viewed in relation to its resources and place in the hierarchy of class differentiation.

A number of studies have recently focussed on the strategies adopted by households in adverse conditions to survive and the role of women in meeting the livelihood needs of the households. The severity of the situation faced by a household would depend on its position in the class hierarchy and its access to land and other assets. The economic stress on most rural households increases considerably during a year of poor monsoons and drought.

The major focus of this paper is on households dependent on wage labour either as a major or a subsidiary source of income. Casual wage work in agriculture or non-agriculture involves hard labour and was traditionally undertaken only by certain low castes. Perhaps due to this, such work is associated with low social status. Hence, generally,

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only members of households of the lower castes or those in dire economic conditions participate in wage work.

In this paper we shall try to identify the employment strategies adopted by such wage dependent households in order to meet their basic needs over a period of time and in comparison with other households. The relative dependence of males and females on wage labour is studied here as one of the strategies adopted by such households in the changing agricultural and technological scenario. Before we analyse the data at the micro level, we shall identify the trends in work participation of males and females at the state level to provide a broader perspective to analyse household level information.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section analyses the broad trends in labour participation and in the status distribution of the work force in rural areas between 1961 and 1983 at the state level. Changes in the employment and incomes of wage-labour households over the period 1964-65 to 1977-78 for the fourteen major states of the country are analysed in section two. The employment strategies adopted at the household level by wage dependent households in a developed and a backward region of Gujarat in 1984-85 are analysed in section three.

TRENDS IN WORK FORCE PARTICIPATION AND CASUALISATION IN RURAL AREAS

The census of India gives us a time series of data on the level and structure of employment. However, frequent changes in the definitions and concepts have made the data non-comparable over time. The 1961 Census is considered to have provided a reasonably good inventory of the work force. The 1961 Census also had a relatively better count of female workers, which was not achieved by the 1971 or 1981 Census. When there is an undercount of workers, data on industrial, occupational or status distribution of workers cannot be compared with any confidence since workers are unlikely to be left out at random (Visaria, 1984). They are likely to be selectively left out from certain industry groups, e.g., agriculture, household industry, personal services, and certain activity status groups, e.g., cultivators/self employed.

Fortunately the quinquennial Employment and Unemployment Surveys of the National Sample Survey (NSS) conducted during 1972-73 (27th Round), 1977-78 (32nd Round) and 1983 (38th Round) provide estimates which appear broadly comparable with the 1961 Census.¹ To ensure a comparable series of data on the work force, the analysis is restricted to time trends based on the 1961 Census and the subsequent NSS Surveys of 1972-73, 1977-78 and 1983.

The worker population ratio (WPR) or the work force participation rate is a broad indicator of the level of employment in the economy. At the all-India level the long term trend in male work participation rates in rural areas between 1961 and 1983 indicates a more or less stable situation. The female work force participation rate, however,

rose gradually and steadily between 1961 and 1983 in both rural and urban areas.

This gradual increase in female WPR may, however, be due to the changing age-composition over the two decades. That is, a decline in the proportion of children in the age group 0 to 14 years and a corresponding increase in the adult population, would lead to a natural increase in WPRs. In order to make inter-temporal changes in participation rates free from the effect of changes in the age-structure of the population we would ideally require age-standardised participation rates using the terminal year (1983) age distribution as weights. Unfortunately this is not possible for two reasons.

- (i) The 1961 Census used age groupings which cannot be made comparable with the age-groupings used in the quinquennial employment surveys.
- (ii) It is not possible to obtain age-specific participation rates for the NSS 27th Round.

The WPRs presented in Table 1 are crude participation rates. However, for all-India we have computed the age-standardised participation rates for 1977-78 using the age specific participation rates for 1977-78 weighted by the age-distribution of 1983, the assumption being that the age distribution for 1977-78 was the same as that in 1983. The age-standardised WPR was 55.8 for males and 33.5 for females in rural areas in 1977-78. This adjustment does not make any difference to the direction of change in participation rates between 1977-78 and for rural females, while it does so in the case of rural males.²

Overall there is no declining trend visible in the work participation of women. In fact, it has risen slightly over the past two decades in rural and urban areas, for the country as a whole. A similar trend was also observed in the majority of states.

While there has been a small increase in the work participation of women over the past two decades, what changes have come about in the status distribution (employer/employee) of the population? During the course of capitalistic development in agriculture, with increase in the productivity of land, there is likely to be an increase in the demand for hired labour, especially on the part of the surplus producing landed households. On the other hand, the landless and very small cultivator households, not possessing adequate resources for a reliable livelihood, have to depend on hiring out their labour. The demographic process of division of households together with the fragmentation of holdings is likely to increase the number of economically nonviable holdings. Unless there is a large-scale increase in non-agricultural activities, such small and marginal farmers may be forced to hire out their labour to supplement their income, or over a period of time lose their land and join the ranks of casual labourers. All these processes are expected to raise the proportion of casual employees in the work force.

The percentage of casual workers, both male and female, in rural areas of the country has shown a steady increase over the period 1961³ to 1983 (Table 2) The maximum increase in the proportion of both male and female casual workers among the rural workers was in the states of Gujarat, Orissa and Tamil Nadu

Further evidence of an increase in the proportion of casual wage workers over the period of study is obtained from the Agricultural and Rural Labour Enquiries (ALE/RLE) (Table 3) The proportion of rural labour households among total rural households has been increasing for all India and all states between 1956-57 and 1983 Uttar Pradesh is the only state which has shown relative stability in the proportion of rural labour households

In recent years there has also been a shift in the structure of the work force away from agriculture and towards industry and services among both male and female workers (for a detailed discussion, see Unni, 1989)

Overall, therefore, the increase in female labour participation in the aggregate, is accompanied by a shift in the structure of employment away from agriculture and increasing casualisation of the work force

CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OF RURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS

The commercialisation of agriculture and the demographic process of the division of households has led to a relatively large increase in the persons and households dependent on wage labour for their livelihood In this process persons who were not earlier working may be forced into the work force, leading to an increase in the labour participation of such households This is likely too be true particularly of the intermittent labour force consisting of women and children

The Rural Labour Enquiries (RLE) of 1964-65, 1974-75 and 1977-78 provide us a series of data on employment, wages and incomes of households, whose major source of income was wage labour in rural areas of the country Here these data are analysed to study some of the employment strategies adopted by such households over a period of time

Worker population ratios by sex⁴ among rural labour households showed a considerable increase between 1964-65 to 1974-75, particularly among females (Table 4) In 1977-78, however, labour participation declined, again quite considerably among females in these households The major activity criterion was introduced in 1977-78⁵ Though some under-enumeration of workers cannot be ruled out due to the change in definition, this cannot account for the large decline in female WPRs between 1974-75 and 1977-78

The basic hypothesis underlying our argument here is that households when faced with severe economic stress adopt certain strategies to ensure their livelihood. The possible explanation for these large fluctuations in labour participation could be the link that

exists between agricultural output in the rural economy and the income levels of labour households. In a year of poor monsoon and consequently low agricultural production the standard of living of the rural households falls. The wage dependent households face severe economic stress also because the days of agricultural employment available to them decline in such a year. The effect of a decline in general levels of living is felt sharply by these households. It could force a large number of those who otherwise are non-workers, such as women and children, into the work force.

The index number of cultivated area and agricultural production at the all-India level between 1949-50 and 1982-83 (see Table 3 in Unni, 1988) gives a clear picture of the ups and downs in agricultural activity during the period. While cultivated area and agricultural production rose above the previous year in 1964-65, there was a sharp decline in both area and production in 1974-75. Obviously 1974-75 was a bad agricultural year. On the other hand, 1977-78 was an exceptionally good year with agricultural production increasing considerably over the previous year.

These fluctuations in cultivated area and total agricultural output help to explain the phenomenon observed earlier. Labour participation is obviously affected by the agricultural production in a particular year with WPRs rising sharply in 1974-75, a year of agricultural scarcity and falling in 1977-78, an agriculturally prosperous year. Female participation appears to be more severely affected by these fluctuations in agricultural output. It appears that rural labour households when faced with severe economic stress, like in 1974-75, send out more workers to ensure themselves a minimum standard of living. On the other hand, in an agriculturally good year like 1977-78, the intermittent workers, particularly women, withdraw from the work force.

It has been observed elsewhere that 'in times of severe economic need women will enter the labour force as agricultural labourers or in other capacities, but when conditions improve, they withdraw to their homes' (Dixon, 1978). Perhaps this is one of the means adopted by households under economic stress in order to maintain at least their subsistence livelihood.

While wage dependent households appear to put out more workers during a poor agricultural year, in what capacity do these persons enter the work force? Do they also mainly engage in wage work? We do not have information separately on the new entrants into the work force in 1974-75. However, the increase in the percentage of wage workers to total population in rural labour households over the period 1964-65 to 1974-75 is much greater than the increase in WPRs over the same period (Tables 4 and 5). This would imply that the additional workers in 1974-75 were mainly engaged in wage work. While the increase in WPRs between the two years at the all-India level was 5.2 and 9.6 percentage points for males and females respectively, the increase in

wage labourers to total population was 36.5 and 27.2 percentage points. At the state level, Bihar, Gujarat and Orissa had the maximum increase in female participation in rural labour households between 1964-65 and 1974-75. Bihar and Gujarat along with Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra also had the maximum increase in the proportion of female wage workers in population in these households over the same period.

Labour households would, in general, be at the bottom of the class hierarchy, but even among these households their relative access to land or other resources may lead to certain differences in their employment behaviour. The percentage of both male and female wage labourers in the population of agricultural labour households⁶ was higher among households without land than among households with land (Table 5). The only exceptions were among female labourers in Gujarat in 1964-65, Rajasthan in 1974-75 and Uttar Pradesh in both years.

The difference in the participation in wage labour in these two types of households was higher among females as compared to males. The dependence on wage labour increased considerably in 1974-75 as compared to 1964-65 in both kinds of households among males and females (Table 5). This provides further evidence of the fact that dependence on wage labour, being associated with low social status, is undertaken even by members of wage dependent households only under considerable economic stress. Hence labour households with some access to land undertake wage labour to a lesser extent than those without land. Female participation in wage labour is also much less than male, particularly in labour households with land. In a year of poor agricultural production, and consequently lower income levels, a large proportion of both males and females in these households are forced to undertake wage work.

Of the workers in rural labour households engaged in wage labour, what proportion are engaged in agricultural or non-agricultural work and how does this change over the years? In the rural areas of the country a majority of the wage workers are engaged in agriculture as compared to non-agriculture. This is particularly true of the female wage workers. A similar pattern is visible in labour households in all the states of the country.

The ratio of wage workers in agriculture to non-agriculture fluctuates over the three years, falling in 1974-75 and rising again in 1977-78 at the all-India level (Table 6). The absolute numbers of both male and female agricultural labourers and non-agricultural labourers have increased in 1974-75 compared to 1964-65. However, the decline in the ratio of agricultural labourers to non-agricultural labourers indicates that the increase in non-agricultural labourers was greater than that of agricultural labourers in 1974-75. It would appear that in a year of poor agricultural output, the dependence on wage work in agriculture is reduced and more workers undertake wage work in non-agriculture,

perhaps on scarcity relief works. However, in 1977-78, when agricultural production picked up considerably, the ratio of agricultural labourers to non-agricultural labourers increased again at the all-India level. This phenomenon was most marked in the state of Gujarat. In the states, of Maharashtra, Punjab/Haryana and Tamil Nadu there was a continuous decline in the ratio of male and female agricultural labourers to non-agricultural labourers, whereas in Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar (only female) there was a continuous increase in this ratio. A possible explanation for this could be that in the relatively developed states Maharashtra, Punjab/Haryana and Tamil Nadu, the increase in non-agricultural activities has absorbed some of the increased female participation in wage work. The latter three states are relatively, backward and predominantly rice-cultivating, so that increased participation in wage labour was perhaps absorbed in agriculture even in the poor agricultural year, 1974-75.

Besides wage employment some members of rural labour households also undertake other kinds of work, mainly self-employment. The RLEs of 1964-65 and 1974-75 collected information on incomes received by households from all sources.⁷ Though this information is not available separately by sex, the average annual household income of labour households (both money and real) by source would provide some insight into the adjustments made within a labour household to take care of variations in employment availability and incomes from year to year. It has been noted elsewhere that the real annual wage earnings of agricultural labourers fell in 1974-75 as compared to 1964-65 in rural labour households due to the reduced agricultural activity in that year.⁸ However, the average annual real household incomes of rural labour households from all sources remained stable and even increased at the all-India level and in some states during this period. It was also observed that the proportion of non-wage and non-agricultural income was the highest in 1974-75 at the all-India level in rural labour households. This would imply that at least some of the reduction in wage incomes from agriculture in real terms in a poor agricultural year is compensated by non-wage and non-agricultural incomes.

Thus rural labour households appear to adopt certain strategies which enable them to maintain their total annual household incomes over a period of time. They readjust their household portfolios both in terms of the manpower available to them as well as the multiple economic activities which are feasible for them to undertake.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN WAGE DEPENDENT HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL AREAS OF GUJARAT

The state of Gujarat has a relatively well developed agricultural sector with a predominance of cash crops like cotton and groundnut. It is also an industrially developed state. Female participation rates are not the highest in the country but are still above the all-India level. However, there was a large increase in female participation in the

rural areas of Gujarat in the last two decades. The increase in casual workers was also relatively high in this state. Overall, the process of economic development and commercialisation can be said to be well set in Gujarat and this appears to have had its impact on the labour market as well. We have chosen Gujarat for an indepth study at the household level using data on employment collected through a village.⁹

The analysis is based on a census of six villages belonging to two different talukas of an agriculturally developed district, Kheda, in Gujarat state. In terms of the levels of agricultural output and productivity, Kheda has been one of the fastest growing districts of Gujarat during 1961-82. This has been partly due to irrigation, where Kheda has been far ahead of others. Kheda is located in central Gujarat and except for some undulating terrain in the northern parts, the district is a plain, sloping gently from the north-east towards the south-west.

Of the two talukas, Anand and Kapadvanj, chosen from the district, Anand is a relatively better irrigated and agriculturally better endowed taluka. Kapadvanj is a relatively dry and agriculturally backward taluka. Anand is situated in the eastern part of Kheda district, the whole taluka is a level plain and is located in the fertile charotar tract which lies between the rivers Shedi and Mahi and is the richest agricultural zone of Gujarat. Kapadvanj is situated in the northern part of Kheda and except for some undulating terrain in the northern part of the taluka, is a level plain country with a slight slope towards the south. Both the talukas have a hot and dry climate, with only the south-west monsoon providing rain during June to September. The average annual rainfall in Anand taluka (880 mm) is slightly better than in Kapadvanj (796 mm).

As the size of the villages (in terms of population) was much smaller in Kapadvanj taluka than in Anand taluka, two villages were selected from Anand and four villages from Kapadvanj taluka. In terms of access, both the villages of Anand had a *pucca* approach road while the four villages of Kapadvanj had only a *kutchha* road. While all the villages, except one in Kapadvanj, had the facility of bus services, the frequency of bus services was much higher in the villages of Anand. The Anand villages were better placed with regard to educational, medical and other infrastructural facilities also.

For the purpose of our analysis, therefore, Anand is considered to be a developed region while Kapadvanj is categorised as a backward region and our six villages are considered representative of these two regions.

The survey of households in the six villages of Kheda district was conducted in 1985 and the data relate to the agricultural year 1984-85. This was the last relatively normal agricultural year in Gujarat before the three-year drought set in. The total number of households in the two villages surveyed in Anand taluka was 1108, while the four

villages of Kapadvanj taluka had a total of 420 households. For our analysis we have grouped the households in each of the talukas by their major source of income. The major difference between these two regions is that while 27 per-cent of households in Anand, the developed region, had a non-agricultural activity as their major source of income, only 8 per cent of households depended mainly on non-agricultural work in the backward region of Kapadvanj taluka.

Households dependent mainly on wage labour are both agricultural labour households and other labour households. Interestingly, approximately 41 per cent of households in both the developed and backward villages have wage labour as their major source of income (Table 7). Besides these households, a large proportion of certain other categories of households also undertake wage work as their subsidiary source of income (Table 8). These are mainly marginal and small cultivators and households engaged in animal husbandry in the Anand villages. In the Kapadvanj villages households with marginal, small and even medium holdings and households engaged in trade/hotels as a major source of income have wage labour as their subsidiary source of income. These households were obviously not able to sustain their livelihood needs with their primary occupations alone and had to undertake wage work as a subsidiary activity.

In the aggregate a larger proportion of households with activities other than wage labour as their major source of income engage in wage work as a subsidiary source in the backward villages (about 20 per cent) as compared to the developed villages (about 12 per cent). Besides, a majority of the wage labour households in both regions also engage in other activities for a secondary source of income, mainly cultivation and animal husbandry. In the developed villages, 21 per cent of the wage dependent households also engage in non-agricultural work as a secondary source of income while only 4 per cent of these households do so in the backward villages. Obviously, there are greater possibilities for diversification of activities in the developed region.

Now that we have identified the households that depend on wage labour either as a major or subsidiary source of income, we shall look at the worker population ratios of males and females in the different household groups. The overall WPRs are much higher in the backward villages as compared to the developed villages (Table 9). In the survey, a very liberal definition of a worker was used including all persons who reported being engaged in economic activity even for short periods as workers. While this definition should give estimates which are close to the 1981 Census main plus marginal workers, the female WPRs are in general much above the census estimates for these regions, and are on par with male WPRs. This is perhaps due to the fact that the field investigators were instructed to probe the question of female participation particularly in animal husbandry.

WPRs of both males and females in wage dependent households are much higher than the average, except in 'other labour' households in

Kapadvanj Besides, WPRs are also relatively high in the household groups that have wage labour as their subsidiary source of income, i.e., marginal and small cultivators in both regions, households dependent on animal husbandry in Anand and those engaged in trade/hotels in Kapadvanj

Thus it appears that wage dependent households send out more workers than other households. Female participation in economic activity is also much higher in these households. This is perhaps one of the strategies adapted by these households to maintain minimum standards of living. Further extension of this phenomenon is what we observed earlier in rural labour households, where they send out more workers in a year of poor agricultural output.

In the case of rural labour households it was noted that the households diversified their economic activities, particularly in a poor agricultural year, in order to maintain their real incomes. In order to capture a similar phenomenon across different household groups we present the percentage of workers in each household group with more than one economic activity and an index of multiple economic activity for males and females in (Tables 10 and 11). This index indicates the average number of economic activities undertaken per worker in each household group.

The percentage of workers undertaking more than one economic activity was about 50 per cent in the developed villages while it was more than 64 per cent in the backward villages (Table 10). In general a larger proportion (more than 60 per cent) of workers undertaking more than one economic activity was in agricultural labour and marginal and small cultivator households and households whose major source of income was animal husbandry in both regions and households engaged in trade and hotels in the backward region. These households were earlier identified as those which undertook wage labour as their major or subsidiary source of income.

The index of multiple economic activities also indicates a similar picture. It is high in wage dependent households particularly for females in agricultural labour households (Table 11). However, this index is the highest for males in marginal cultivator households and households engaged in animal husbandry in Anand, while in Kapadvanj it is the highest for marginal and small cultivator households and households engaged in trade/hotels. Among females, the number of economic activities undertaken per worker was highest in agricultural labour households, followed by marginal cultivator households in Anand. In Kapadvanj it was the highest for females in marginal and small cultivator households.

Obviously, the need to undertake more than one activity is greater in these relatively poor households, the majority of which depend on wage labour either as a major or subsidiary source of household income. Thus, so far we have identified two employment strategies adopted by wage dependent households. While they send out more workers to

ensure a minimum standard of living, the number of economic activities engaged in by each worker also appears to be greater in these households. However, it would be interesting to see how these households allocate their workers by sex to different economic activities. More specifically, we shall look at the relative dependence of males and females on wage labour in these household groups.

The majority of male and female workers in wage labour households (agricultural and other labour) reported wage work as their first economic activity (Table 12). However, the dependence of female workers in these households on wage labour was a little less than that of male workers, particularly in Kapadvanj taluka. In general, the principal activity of male workers in the non-labour household groups correspond to the major source of household income. A large proportion of female workers in these household groups, however, engaged in wage labour as their principal activity, particularly in the households dependent on household industry, trade/hotels and salaried jobs in Anand, and trade/hotels and others in Kapadvanj taluka. Apparently, some of the non-labour households resort to the strategy of retaining their male workers for their primary activity and sending out their female workers for wage labour. To the extent that engaging in wage work, particularly by women, would lower the social status of the household, such an allocation of labour would imply that these households were unable to maintain their standard of living with their primary source of household income alone.

However, the distribution of workers by secondary activity indicates that a sizeable proportion of both sexes undertook some amount of wage labour in the subsidiary capacity in most household groups. Male dependence on wage labour as a secondary activity was relatively higher than that of females in both regions, particularly in marginal and small cultivator households and households engaged in household industry and trade/hotels.¹⁰

Overall, the principal activity of the male and female workers corresponded to the primary source of household income. However, in the case of households dependent on wage labour as a subsidiary activity, the allocation of labour appeared to be such that the male workers engaged in the primary activity of the household in their principal capacity and undertook wage labour to a large extent as their first economic activity. This is perhaps another employment strategy undertaken by some households in order to maintain or raise their minimum standard of living.

CONCLUSIONS

At the macro level there is an increasing trend in the work participation of females. This was accompanied by a shift in the work force away from agriculture and increasing casualisation of the work force in rural areas. These trends were found to be particularly marked in the state of Gujarat. In the subsequent two sections we were able to

identify some of the likely processes through which such changes in the level and status distribution of the work force take place. These we have categorised as certain employment strategies adopted by households faced with adverse conditions

While it is difficult to draw any definitive inferences regarding trends from data relating to only three time-points, an interesting feature observed was the employment behaviour of rural labour households in a year of poor agricultural output. Rural labour households which constitute some of the poorest sections of society are faced with extreme economic stress in a year of poor monsoons. However, these households on an average were able to maintain their annual real household incomes by adopting a strategy of sending out more workers, particularly women, shifting to non-agricultural work and even increasing the component of non-wage income.

Even among rural labour households it was observed that female labour participation was lower among households with land. However in a poor agricultural year, female participation increased considerably in both kinds of households.

Similar phenomena were observed when wage dependent households in developed and backward regions of Gujarat were compared with households having sources of income other than wage work. Households dependent on wage labour, both as a primary and subsidiary source of household income, were found to be sending out more workers than other households. Participation was also much higher in these households. The backward villages had higher labour participation of both sexes than the developed villages. Besides higher participation in economic activity, the number of economic activities undertaken per worker was also higher in the wage dependent households.

While the majority of male and female workers in primarily wage labour households worked as wage workers in their principal capacity, the household allocation of labour in households dependent on wage labour as their subsidiary capacity provides a clue to another strategy adopted by these households to maintain or raise their standard of living. It appeared that male workers engaged in the primary activity of the household in their principal capacity and undertook wage labour as a subsidiary activity. On the other hand, female workers undertook wage labour to a large extent as their principal economic activity. While this points to the limited diversification of women's work it also indicates a practical utilisation of available skills in the household to maximise total household incomes.

There has been a large increase in the number and proportion of rural labour households over the past two decades. Thus, together with the fact of higher female participation in these households and predominance of wage work, perhaps provides the clue to the overall trend of increasing female participation and casualisation of the work force.

Table 1
Worker Population Ratios in Rural Areas by Sex, 1961-83

States	Male				Female			
	1961	1972-73	1977-78	1983	1961	1972-73	1977-78	1983
All-India	58.2	54.5	54.7	55.6	31.4	31.8	32.6	34.2
Andhra Pradesh	64.3	62.4	61.3	61.5	46.0	45.1	44.4	47.4
Bihar	56.0	51.6	51.9	52.4	28.5	19.6	20.9	25.2
Gujarat	55.3	52.3	53.6	55.4	34.1	37.8	38.4	42.4
Haryana	52.9	49.2	49.8	47.6	24.7	29.0	26.0	24.0
Himachal Pradesh	59.1	52.2	59.4	53.8	50.2	45.2	57.1	47.3
Karnataka	60.4	57.5	57.4	59.7	36.8	43.0	37.0	39.2
Kerala	47.4	46.8	49.7	48.4	20.9	25.4	40.3	30.5
Madhya Pradesh	61.6	56.3	56.4	57.5	48.6	44.0	41.5	44.3
Maharashtra	58.1	54.6	55.4	56.6	46.7	45.5	46.4	47.4
Orissa	61.0	57.7	55.8	57.9	27.4	30.7	27.4	29.1
Punjab	53.6	54.8	56.3	58.8	5.9	26.7	26.8	31.8
Rajasthan	60.1	58.0	57.3	56.5	40.8	52.9	52.6	47.5
Tamil Nadu	62.2	60.3	60.1	59.8	37.1	44.4	44.1	44.8
Uttar Pradesh	59.2	53.3	52.2	54.5	19.9	23.8	21.2	26.2
West Bengal	53.5	50.5	52.4	54.0	10.6	12.9	16.9	19.3

- Source s 1 Census of India, 1961, Vol. 1, India, part II B(i), *General Economic Tables*
 2 NSSO, *Sarvekshana*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1977, Vol. V, Nos. 1 & 2, 1981, Vol. VI, Nos. 1 & 2, 1982, Vol. VI Nos. 3 & 4, 1983, Vol. VII, No. 3, 1984, Vol. VII, No. 4, 1984
 3 NSSO, 38th Round, 1983, No. 341, *Report on the Third quinquennial Survey on Employment and Unemployment Survey, All-India*

Table 2
Percentage of Casual Workers Among Total Workers in Rural Areas, 1961-1983

States	1961		1972-73		1977-78		1983	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All-India	18.1	27.7	22.0	31.4	26.7	35.1	29.8	35.5
Andhra Pradesh	25.6	42.5	27.4	48.9	33.6	52.8	36.4	52.6
Bihar	23.5	32.3	24.1	36.0	32.6	45.7	35.9	42.4
Gujarat	17.1	24.6	22.2	26.3	29.4	31.7	34.5	38.2
Haryana	10.6	7.2	9.7	8.4	14.9	18.9	19.7	21.9
Himachal Pradesh	2.3	1.3	4.9	0.6	13.4	1.7	10.9	1.1
Karnataka	16.4	28.0	27.3	37.2	33.6	47.9	34.6	46.3
Kerala	20.3	36.5	39.1	47.7	37.7	32.2	40.4	31.5
Madhya Pradesh	17.3	23.2	15.5	24.8	22.2	31.1	25.3	31.0
Maharashtra	25.6	35.6	31.8	44.8	30.8	46.8	35.6	48.7
Orissa	20.3	29.0	27.1	37.9	33.9	45.9	35.2	45.5
Punjab	15.5	8.1	16.0	9.6	19.0	17.4	21.5	7.0
Rajasthan	5.1	6.1	5.5	4.9	10.9	8.3	13.8	10.3
Tamil Nadu	21.6	35.6	31.3	45.9	35.5	48.6	43.5	52.5
Uttar Pradesh	12.2	21.7	12.9	14.0	16.3	20.2	18.1	17.0
West Bengal	22.2	26.0	32.1	38.9	34.1	33.1	39.1	34.1

Note 1 1961 data relate to agricultural labourers only. Unclassified and general workers have been distributed prorata between agricultural labour, construction and other services.

Source Same as Table 1

EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES ADOPTED IN WAGE-DEPENDENT HOUSEHOLDS 35

Table 3
Percentage of Rural Labour Households to Total Rural Households, 1956-57 to 1983

States	1956-57	1964-65	1974-75	1977-78	1983
All-India	24.5	25.4	30.26	36.78	37.27
Andhra Pradesh	36.1	34.3	39.42	46.69	48.35
Bihar	29.4	31.6	36.41	41.06	39.90
Gujarat	16.9	18.5	29.58	36.75	37.36
Karnataka	27.5	29.8	35.77	45.16	42.64
Kerala	24.9	42.1	42.18	47.39	49.29
Madhya Pradesh	24.7	22.4	24.01	30.90	33.62
Maharashtra	30.9	34.0	36.68	46.28	45.68
Orissa	30.8	28.4	36.58	41.70	40.97
Punjab/Haryana	11.6	17.4	20.87	29.26	31.7
Rajasthan	5.4	7.6	6.45	16.11	17.27
Tamil Nadu	35.6	30.6	44.29	47.86	52.41
Uttar Pradesh	17.0	16.0	19.06	22.90	22.14
West Bengal	24.3	34.1	38.77	44.70	46.55

Note The figures for 1956-57 refer to agricultural labour households only

Source 1 NSSO, 1960, 11th and 12th Round, 1956-57, Number 33

2 Labour Bureau, 1981, RLF 1974-75

3 NSSO, 1982, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/1

4 NSSO, 1987, 38th Round, 1983, Number 341

Table 4
Worker Population Ratios by Sex in Rural Labour Households 1964-65 to 1977-78

States	1964-1965		1974-1975		1977-1978	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All-India	87.5	55.8	92.7	65.4	90.1	49.5
Andhra Pradesh	92.0	76.8	94.4	80.6	90.9	66.8
Bihar	87.9	47.9	93.3	63.3	92.7	40.3
Gujarat	85.9	64.3	92.0	76.7	90.8	57.7
Karnataka	87.7	71.8	91.7	78.1	-	-
Kerala	79.2	47.4	81.6	50.9	73.3	36.6
Madhya Pradesh	92.1	73.6	96.1	83.6	93.9	69.2
Maharashtra	85.0	70.9	91.7	81.6	90.8	72.0
Orissa	89.4	41.0	92.2	54.1	91.6	44.7
Punjab/Haryana	83.1	23.3	87.8	34.1	87.2	20.9
Rajasthan	85.6	63.5	91.5	68.7	91.4	52.0
Tamil Nadu	85.7	67.9	91.5	76.5	90.0	57.5
Uttar Pradesh	88.4	46.7	92.9	53.4	92.0	34.9
West Bengal	88.6	23.7	93.7	35.3	91.8	23.2

Source 1 Labour Bureau, 1973, RLE 1963-65

2 Labour Bureau, 1981, RLF 1974-75

3 NSSO, 1984, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/2

Table 5
Percentage of Wage Labourers to total Population in Agricultural
Labour Households with Land and without land, 1964-65, 1974-75.

(1964-1965)

States	Agricultural Labour Households						All Rural Labour Households	
	With Land		Without Land					
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All-India	52.6	31.6	56.0	39.6	54.4	35.5	53.3	33.8
Andhra Pradesh	57.5	51.1	60.9	53.1	59.9	53.3	58.3	51.0
Bihar	50.2	25.6	51.2	30.7	50.4	27.3	49.8	27.0
Gujarat	49.1	43.9	51.0	41.5	50.4	42.4	50.6	39.0
Karnataka	53.2	39.6	55.3	48.6	53.4	44.7	52.2	43.0
Kerala	44.7	27.0	48.0	37.1	45.4	29.7	44.6	27.2
Madhya Pradesh	58.1	45.9	59.2	49.0	58.5	46.8	58.6	47.0
Maharashtra	51.0	43.4	55.3	50.2	54.1	47.6	53.4	45.8
Orissa	55.6	23.0	56.7	27.1	55.8	24.2	55.4	25.7
Punjab/Haryana	47.8	9.0	49.3	13.3	49.5	12.4	47.9	12.7
Rajasthan	58.7	37.1	53.7	41.9	56.5	39.4	51.3	35.3
Tamil Nadu	54.6	44.5	56.2	51.3	55.8	49.0	55.2	46.3
Uttar Pradesh	52.9	28.3	56.3	22.6	54.8	26.3	53.6	24.4
West Bengal	50.4	8.9	53.9	12.4	52.4	10.6	51.8	13.0

(1974-1965)

States	Agricultural Labour Households						All Rural Labour Households	
	With Land		Without Land					
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All-India	89.2	61.2	91.9	66.9	90.3	64.2	89.8	61.0
Andhra Pradesh	88.9	79.8	93.7	81.3	90.4	80.0	91.2	79.1
Bihar	92.2	60.0	94.1	65.9	91.7	62.3	91.0	60.4
Gujarat	87.9	73.5	90.7	79.7	89.4	77.1	90.7	74.6
Karnataka	88.0	74.7	90.6	79.7	88.7	78.6	88.7	74.4
Kerala	76.8	50.0	83.2	68.7	78.3	52.3	77.8	45.7
Madhya Pradesh	94.9	83.0	95.9	85.0	96.1	85.0	95.4	82.8
Maharashtra	87.4	79.6	90.2	85.1	88.0	82.1	88.2	79.6
Orissa	91.5	46.5	95.4	62.5	93.0	58.1	91.4	52.6
Punjab/Haryana	76.4	21.9	85.3	21.9	84.1	21.2	83.4	21.1
Rajasthan	87.0	74.6	92.3	66.4	89.8	67.7	88.0	61.1
Tamil Nadu	87.2	75.5	89.7	80.3	89.7	78.0	87.6	74.2
Uttar Pradesh	88.6	48.6	90.8	41.2	90.7	45.5	89.4	43.6
West Bengal	90.4	26.6	96.2	30.1	92.9	29.1	92.2	30.1

Source 1 Labour Bureau, 1973, RLE 1963-65

2 Labour Bureau, 1981, RLE 1974-75

EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES ADOPTED IN WAGE-DEPENDENT HOUSEHOLDS 37

Table 6
Ratio of Agricultural Labourers to Non-Agricultural
Labourers in Rural Labour Households

States	1964-1965		1974-1975		1977-1978	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All-India	59	84	50	81	56	98
1 Andhra Pradesh	115	235	89	191	98	196
2 Bihar	65	91	112	134	109	221
3 Gujarat	98	302	27	36	72	136
4 Karnataka	119	207	58	156	-	-
5 Kerala	20	22	17	26	18	26
6 Madhya Pradesh	117	135	93	135	121	197
7 Maharashtra	93	263	60	137	51	108
8 Orissa	72	46	55	66	85	130
9 Punjab/Haryana	45	31	31	27	30	13
10 Rajasthan	28	32	15	28	17	37
11 Tamil Nadu	92	335	52	141	51	124
12 Uttar Pradesh	68	116	50	101	44	132
13 West Bengal	32	12	44	20	56	21

Source 1 Labour Bureau, 1973, RLE 1963-65
2 Labour Bureau, 1981, RLE 1974-75
3 NSSO, 1984, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/2

Table 7
Percentage Distribution of Households by Major Source of Income (1984-85)

Major Source of Income	Anand Villages %	Anand Villages No	Kapadvanj Villages %	Kapadvanj Villages No
1 Cultivation				
Marginal	14.6	162	6.4	27
Small	13.3	147	30.7	129
Medium	4.5	50	11.9	50
Large	1.2	13	2.4	10
(Unspecified)	0.3	3	-	-
All	33.8	374	51.4	216
2 Agri Lab	38.2	423	40.5	170
3 Animal Husbandry	1.0	11	0.5	2
Agriculture	73.0	809	92.4	388
4 Other Labour	2.4	26	0.2	1
5 Household Industry	3.1	34	1.2	5
6 Trade/Hotel/R	3.5	39	1.7	7
7 Salaried Job	13.4	148	2.1	9
8 Services	1.3	14	-	-
9 Others	3.2	35	2.4	10
Non-Agri	27.0	299	7.6	32
All Households	100.00 (1108)	1108	100.0 (420)	420
Labour Households	40.6	449	40.7	171

Source Village Survey, 1985

Table 8
Percentage Distribution of Households Subsidiary Sources of Income for Each Major Source of Household Income, 1984-85
Developed (Anand) Region

Major Source of Income	Subsidiary Source of Income										No Subsidiary Source	Total
	Cultivation	Agri Lab	Animal Husbandry	Agri-culture Ind	Other Labour	Household	Trade/Hotel Restaurant etc	Salaried Job	Services	Others	Non-Agriculture	
1 Cultivation												
Marginal	-	395	426	821	25	12	25	37	18	-	117	62
Small	-	184	558	742	-	07	14	150	34	-	204	56
Medium	-	20	700	720	-	20	60	80	-	-	160	120
Large	-	-	385	385	-	-	231	154	-	-	385	231
Unspecified	-	333	-	333	333	-	-	-	-	-	333	333
All	-	248	509	757	13	11	32	91	21	-	168	75
2 Agri Lab	329	-	336	665	76	14	09	24	12	17	152	184
3 Animal Husbandry	182	182	-	364	-	-	91	91	-	-	182	454
4 Agriculture	174	117	412	703	46	12	21	56	16	09	160	137
5 Other Labour	259	296	111	666	-	37	37	-	-	-	74	259
6 Household												
Industry	59	147	-	206	-	-	30	147	-	88	265	529
7 Trade/Hotel/etc	128	128	103	359	-	-	-	77	51	103	231	410
8 Salaried Job	282	128	128	538	07	34	07	-	20	33	101	362
9 Services	286	-	143	429	-	-	-	-	-	-	571	1000
Others	28	139	56	223	-	-	28	-	56	-	84	694
Non-Agriculture	205	140	100	445	03	20	13	27	23	40	126	428
Total	182	124	328	634	34	14	19	48	18	17	150	216

Table 8 (contd.)

Backward (Kapadvan) Region												
Major Source of Income	Subsidiary Source of Income										No Sub- sidiary Source	Total
	Culti- vation	Agri Lab	Animal Husban- dry	Agri- culture Ind	Other Labour	House- hold	Trade/ Hotel Restua- rant etc	Sal- ried Job	Servi- ces	Others		
1 Cultivation												
Marginal	-	667	296	963	37	-	-	-	-	-	37	1000
Small	-	341	550	891	-	08	31	23	16w	-	78	1000
Medium	-	260	640	900	-	20	-	20	-	-	40	1000
Large	-	100	700	800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
Unspecified	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
All	-	352	546	898	06	09	18	18	09	-	60	1000
2 Agri Labour	694	-	82	776	06	-	18	06	-	12	42	1000
3 Animal Husbandry	500	-	-	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
Agriculture	307	196	340	843	05	05	18	12	05	05	50	1000
Other Labour	-	100	-	1000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
4 Household Industry	200	200	-	400	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
5 Trade/Hotel/Rest	143	714	143	1000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
6 Salaried Job	889	-	111	1000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
7 Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
8 Others	100	200	-	300	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
9 Non Agriculture	344	281	63	688	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000
Total	310	202	319	831	05	05	16	12	05	05	48	121 1000

Table 9
Worker Population Ratios by Major Source of
Household Income, 1984-85 (per 1000 population)

Major Source of Income	Developed (Anand) Region			Backward (Kapurthala) Region		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1 Cultivation						
Marginal	610	610	610	588	701	639
Small	593	565	580	610	658	632
Medium	558	382	470	615	581	599
Large	568	260	404	556	476	517
Unspecified	500	500	500	-	-	-
All	593	536	566	605	631	617
2 Agricultural Labour	600	623	610	664	625	646
3 Animal Husbandry	720	667	694	1000	500	800
Agriculture	598	578	588	630	791	629
4 Other Labour	656	532	602	333	333	333
5 Household Industries	573	233	426	750	571	684
6 Trade/Hotel etc	466	300	382	692	800	739
7 Salaried Job	506	319	418	553	529	542
8 Services	529	342	431	-	-	-
9 Others	152	310	240	385	500	457
Non-Agricultural	500	322	415	570	553	561
All Households	573	509	544	626	623	625
1981 Census (Main + Marginal)	538	160	361	613	420	524

Table 10
Percentage of Workers by One and More than One Economic Activity
in Households by Each Major Source of Income, 1984-85

Major Source of Household Income	Developed (Anand) Region				Backward (Kapurthala) Region			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Only One	More than one	Only One	More than one	Only One	More than one	Only one	More than one
1 Cultivation								
a Marginal	34.3	65.7	44.6	55.4	19.1	80.9	29.8	70.2
b Small	49.6	50.3	58.5	41.4	26.4	73.6	31.8	68.2
c Medium	71.8	28.1	86.4	13.6	34.4	65.6	45.6	54.4
d Large	72.0	28.0	84.6	15.4	72.0	28.0	35.0	65.0
e Unspecified	40.0	60.0	50.0	50.0	-	-	-	-
All farmers (a-e)	47.3	52.6	56.6	43.4	30.2	69.8	34.7	65.3
2 Agricultural Labour	38.9	61.1	38.0	62.0	32.2	67.8	35.1	64.9
3 Animal Husbandry	38.9	61.1	62.5	37.5	33.3	66.7	100.0	-
Agriculture (1-3)	43.2	56.8	47.4	52.6	31.1	68.9	35.0	65.0
4 Other labour	52.5	47.5	56.0	44.0	100.0	-	100.0	-
5 Household Industry	81.8	18.2	76.5	23.5	77.8	22.2	50.0	50.0
6 Trade/hotels	80.0	20.0	63.9	36.1	33.3	66.7	62.5	37.5
7 Salaried job	68.9	31.1	66.1	33.9	47.6	52.4	44.4	55.5
8 Services	61.1	38.9	84.6	15.4	-	-	-	-
9 Others	71.4	28.6	61.1	38.9	80.0	20.0	63.6	36.4
Non-Agriculture (4-9)	70.3	29.7	66.1	33.9	55.6	44.4	54.8	45.2
Total (1-9)	49.1	50.9	50.5	49.5	32.5	67.5	36.2	63.8

EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES ADOPTED IN WAGE-DEPENDENT HOUSEHOLDS 41

Table 11
Indices of Multiple Economic Activity By Major Source of Household Income, 1984-85

Major Source of Household Income	Developed (Anand) Region			Backward (Kapurthala) Region		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1 Cultivation						
Marginal	1.72	1.62	1.67	2.15	2.00	2.07
Small	1.54	1.44	1.49	1.92	1.83	1.88
Medium	1.28	1.15	1.23	1.70	1.61	1.66
Large	1.28	1.15	1.24	1.28	1.65	1.44
Unspecified	1.60	1.50	4.57	-	-	-
All farmers	1.57	1.47	1.53	1.86	1.79	1.83
2 Ag. Labour	1.69	1.71	1.70	1.78	1.81	1.80
3 Animal Husbandry	1.72	1.38	1.56	1.67	1.00	1.50
Agriculture	1.63	1.59	1.61	1.82	1.80	1.81
4 Other Labour	1.58	1.44	1.52	1.00	1.00	1.00
5 Household						
Industries	1.18	1.24	1.19	1.22	1.50	1.31
6 Trade/Hotel etc	1.22	1.42	1.30	2.00	1.38	1.71
7 Salaried Job	1.33	1.35	1.33	1.52	1.56	1.54
8 Services	1.44	1.15	1.32	-	-	-
9 Others	1.29	1.44	1.40	1.20	1.36	1.31
Non-Agriculture	1.32	1.36	1.33	1.51	1.45	1.48
All Sources	1.56	1.55	1.56	1.81	1.78	1.79

Table 12 (contd)

Backward (KAPADVANI) Region

Major Source of Income	Male					Female						
	Employer	Self Employed	Helps Family	Labour	Sal Emp	Total	Employer	Self Employed	Helps Family	Labour	Sal Emp	Total
1 Cultivation												
a Marginal	-	74.5	17.0	6.4	2.1	100.0 (47)	-	87.2	12.8	-	-	100.0 (47)
b Small	1.2	76.8	19.5	1.6	0.8	100.0 (246)	-	71.0	27.6	1.4	-	100.0 (217)
c Medium	1.0	64.6	31.3	1.0	2.1	100.0 (96)	1.3	57.0	41.8	-	-	100.0 (79)
d Large	8.0	64.0	20.0	-	8.0	100.0 (25)	-	70.0	30.0	-	-	100.0 (20)
Total	1.4	72.9	22.0	1.9	1.7	100.0 (414)	0.3	70.0	28.9	0.8	-	100.0 (363)
2 Agricultural labour	-	4.8	5.1	87.9	2.2	100.0 (314)	-	18.5	12.1	68.5	0.8	100.0 (248)
3 Animal Husbandry	-	66.7	33.3	-	-	100.0 (3)	-	100.0	-	-	-	100.0 (1)
Agricultural sector	0.8	43.6	14.8	38.9	1.9	100.0 (731)	0.2	49.1	22.1	28.3	0.3	100.0 (612)
Other labour	-	-	-	100.0	-	100.0 (1)	-	-	-	100.0	-	100.0 (1)
4 Household industry	-	77.8	11.1	-	11.1	100.0 (9)	-	50.0	50.0	-	-	100.0 (4)
5 Trade/hotel	-	77.8	-	22.2	-	100.0 (9)	-	50.0	12.5	37.5	-	100.0 (8)
6 Salaried jobs	-	23.8	9.5	14.3	52.4	100.0 (21)	-	55.6	38.9	5.6	-	100.0 (18)
7 Personal services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8 Other	-	40.0	-	40.0	20.0	100.0 (5)	-	36.4	9.1	45.5	9.1	100.0 (11)
9 Non-agri sector	-	46.6	6.7	17.8	28.9	100.0 (45)	-	47.6	26.2	23.8	2.4	100.0 (42)
All (1-9)	0.8	43.8	14.3	37.6	3.5	100.0 (776)	0.2	49.1	22.3	28.0	0.5	100.0 (654)

NOTES

- 1 A detailed review of the concepts and definitions used in the Census of 1961, 1971, 1981 and NSS Rounds and problems of comparability among them is available in Unni (1989)
- 2 For 1977-78, Sundaram has worked out age-standardised WPR of rural females for all major states. For a detailed account of changes in WPR, between 1961 Census and later NSS Rounds at the state level, see Sundaram (undated)
- 3 The 1961 census estimates of agricultural labourers are sometimes said to be underestimates due to a mix up in the Census enumeration. However, a comparison with the 16th (1960-61) and the 17th (1961-62) NSS Rounds indicates that this under-enumeration was not significant. Also, these estimates are in line with later NSS surveys of 1972-73, 1977-78 and 1983. For a detailed comparison of these estimates please see Unni (1989)
- 4 A detailed discussion of changes in employment among rural labour households is available in Unni (1988)
- 5 In the first two RLEs, the usual occupation of a person was identified as the gainful occupation which he usually pursued irrespective of what he may be doing at the time of interview or during the reference period of the preceding week. In the RLE of 1977-78, however, the major time criterion was introduced. A person's usual occupation was identified as the occupation he pursued over the major time of the 365 days preceding the date of interview. This change in the definition is likely to have reduced the number of usually occupied persons captured in the RLE 1977-78
- 6 Data on workers in rural labour households by land status were not available for 1964-65, hence these data are presented for agricultural labour households only
- 7 Data for 1977-78 was collected for a large sample of labour households in rural areas with the Employment-Unemployment Survey of the 32nd Round. The idea of collecting information on incomes of these households was however dropped. Hence we do not have data on household incomes for 1977-78
- 8 For a detailed analysis of wage earnings and household incomes of these rural labour households see Unni (1988)
- 9 This survey was conducted as a part of a project undertaken by the Gujarat Institute of Area Planning. For details of the survey villages and project area see Basant (1988)
- 10 To save space the table showing the distribution of workers by subsidiary activity and major source of household income is not given in the paper

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*Work, Wealth and Health: Sociology of
Workers' Health in India****

Ghanshyam Das Birla was a member of the 1931 Royal Commission on Labour¹ and a respected adviser of the 1969 National Commission on Labour² The 1931 Royal Commission found the state of working and living conditions of Indian labour to be 'appalling' and made 357 recommendations for remedying this Of these 357 recommendations many concern the passing of new legislations and the rest involved administrative action by governments, public bodies, employers' associations, and workers' unions³

The 1969 National Commission, almost forty years later, found that both working and living conditions had improved somewhat in some sectors but, more than that, workers had 'got used to a rhythm of work with all the good and bad points thrown in' 'He (the worker) accepts certain environments associated with certain types of work It is only when these get changed for the worse, and that too beyond a limit, that protest begins This limit is itself elastic'⁴ The Commission made 300 conclusions and recommendations wherein it found that, in general, statutory provisions were adequate but effective enforcement was lacking

Nathuram was a labourer employed in a Birla concern manufacturing caustic soda in eastern Madhya Pradesh He was employed through a labour contractor and, on the days he found employment, he earned Rs 71, well below the stipulated minimum wage Most of the work he did was maintenance and repair work which, the management argued, was 'non-process' Curiously enough, when the permanent 'process' workers struck work in 1980 over economic demands the Birla management closed down production for two months, but when Nathuram and his other 'non-process' colleagues resorted to a strike in 1984 for regularisation and implementation of statutory requirements, the management agreed to negotiate within two days

Nathuram's father had been displaced from the land when the

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factory was built. So his family had no option but to work as contract labourers. He lived in a ramshackle hut in a 'labour colony' without any civic amenities. He was not entitled to any welfare services provided by the law. One day while carrying a 100 kg salt bag, he slipped off the ramp, broke his spine, and died. There was no compensation and his wife, struggling to make a living, sorts out salt lumps from the brine sludge dumped by the factory and sells them in the local market. Unknown to her or the consumers the salt contains trace elements of mercury.⁵

Ghanshyam Das Birla died in 1983, at the ripe age of 89, a wise old man widely honoured and praised as the foremost Indian industrialist, a dynamic entrepreneur, dedicated supporter of Mahatma Gandhi in the national independence movement, and worthy donor to charitable causes. Nathuram died in 1984 at the age of 25, unsung, unknown, almost unwanted. Therein hangs the structure of development of Indian society.

The health of working men, women and children who carry the burden of this development on their shoulders is closely dependent upon the dual environment in which they work and live. In this paper we propose to examine a third aspect also, that is, the socio-economic coordinates of these primary determinants of health. The major variables under scrutiny are (i) the nature of the industrialising process, (ii) the social stratification and its implications for the health of the labour force, (iii) impact of the intervention through welfare services, (iv) the role of legal processes, (v) the trade union movement, and (vi) the last section attempts to bring these together by tracing the common thread that binds them.

Our focus is on the Indian industrial worker, not because we consider the agricultural worker less important, but because the questions we are asking can be better examined in the industrial sector, given the present availability of data and existence of not only laws but also mechanisms of state control and supervision. We have depended upon two types of data: (i) secondary data published by the Labour Bureau of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, and (ii) information on industries of a district in Madhya Pradesh—Shahdol—and its surrounding areas, of which we have first hand knowledge.⁶ This district has one paper mill, a caustic soda and chlorine unit, a thermal power station, one yellow ochre factory and bone-crushing unit each, and fourteen coal mines of which three are open-cast mines and the others underground. The work done by our colleagues and us in the district provided insights into the social and economic determinants of health and encouraged us to check the trends at the national level.

DEATH AND DISEASE

Hazardous work manifests itself, in the first instance, in injuries to the human body. In the extreme case this also results in death or severe disability. Since these injuries or fatalities are required to be reported

under the law and since they and their causal factors are immediately visible, considerable data exists over a large number of years on death and injury in Indian industry

An examination of frequency rates of industrial injuries is quite revealing. Table 1 clearly shows an increase over time in frequency rates for both fatal and non-fatal injuries. It also shows that the rates of fatal injuries in mines are very high as compared to the rates of fatal injuries in factories. A comparison with cases reported under the different Acts shows a marked and consistent difference between fatal injury rates as reported under the Factories Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act. According to the Workmen's Act and the rates of fatal injuries become more than double. This reveals the lacunae in the implementation of the Factories Act 1948. Despite the limitations of the data however, the rising frequency rates of injuries as recorded under the Factories Act suggest the increasingly hazardous nature of the actual working conditions in industries. This rise, as we show later in this paper, is neither due to increased efficiency of the working of the machinery for implementation of the Factory Act nor is it due to any increase in pressure from the workers' organisations for safety and sanitation at the work place.

Work hazards are also responsible for occupational diseases. The first of these became notifiable only in 1948. Hence, data on these is understandably limited. However, survey reports from different parts of India give an idea of the rates of occupational illness. For example, the Indian Council for Medical Research in its review of occupational diseases reports prevalence rates of up to 34.1 per cent for silicosis in Bihar mines,⁷ up to 45 per cent for pneumoconiosis in coal mines,⁸ and 8.4 per cent of byssinosis in textile workers.⁹ Its survey of textile workers has given prevalence rates of 11 to 14 per cent.¹⁰ Similarly, for asbestosis, silicosis and lead poisoning, surveys in different occupational groups have reported rates ranging between 6.5 to 30 per cent, 16-57 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. For carbon di-sulphide and manganese poisoning the reported rates are as high as 27 per cent and 24 per cent.¹¹ In addition to these occupational diseases, Padmanabhan has reported high risks of cancer in units handling radio-active materials¹² and serious symptoms of carbon di-sulphide poisoning in rayon mill workers.¹³ Apart from these surveys, there are reports of pesticide poisoning among workers and the general population especially due to indiscriminate use of lethal pesticides.¹⁴ Mohari has taken the national statistics for pesticides used in agriculture and disabilities in rural areas and has shown that, 'there is a positive significant statistical correlation between intensity of pesticides use per hectare and prevalence rates of deformity of limbs, dysfunction of joints, amputations and visual disabilities'.¹⁵ Yet another survey of rural families of Punjab¹⁶ reported crippling accident rates of 5/1000 population and disabling accident rates of 110.6/1000.

Mohan, on the basis of this data, estimated 316,000 workers killed and 2.5 million crippled every year¹⁷

These independent reports, though useful, do not always provide an overall picture. Given the size and range of production in India and the quality of official data, it is difficult to assess the exact effect of the work environment on the workers, particularly since only those firms employing more than 20 persons (without power) or 10 persons (with power) are required to report and, even of these, a majority either do not report or falsify information. However, even the reported statistics are indicative of certain significant trends and mechanisms which we examine below.

The official records on occupational diseases are difficult to interpret as not only do the symptoms often take long to appear, but employers are also reluctant to relate the diseases to occupational factors. Thus an extremely small number of cases come to notice, depending upon the zeal of the factory inspectors or the militancy and knowledge of the workers. According to the Labour Bureau's records, till as late as 1948 there was no way of detecting occupational diseases other than the Workmen's Compensation Act under which returns submitted by provincial governments were the main source of information. 'The provisions of the Indian Act relating to compensation have been rarely invoked and the number of cases of such diseases which are reported is very small'. During 1947 for example, no case was reported to have occurred in any one of the provinces.¹⁸ The three such cases of suspected lead poisoning were disposed of by the Commissioner for Workmen's Compensation Act, Bengal, disallowing compensation. A report of the U.P. Government is quoted for the reasons of this paucity: 'There is no suitable agency for reporting occupational diseases and no compensation is paid in deserving cases merely because the cause of disablement or death is not properly diagnosed'.¹⁹

Table 2, shows that from 1960 to 1980 only 639 cases of occupational diseases were reported under the Factories Act 1948. It is obviously unrealistic to expect that in 20 years only this many workers have suffered from occupational diseases when 22 such diseases are notifiable under the law (raised to 34 in 1984). The official statistics themselves reveal the truth when we again match the reporting under the Factories Act 1948 with the reporting under the Workmen's Compensation Act 1923. Table 2 shows that the latter consistently reported a higher number of cases even though after 1952 a large number of cases which would previously have been eligible for compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act, were covered under the new Employee's State Insurance Scheme. This disparity is explained by the fact that under the Factories Act 1948, only the Inspectorate has the authority to take the employer to court, while workers can do nothing. Under the Workmen's Compensation Act 1923, however, the worker as the affected party has the right to take legal action. The difference in the cases under these two laws, both meant for

redressal of grievances of workers, reflects the reluctance of employers to report occupational diseases and pay compensations, and the compliance of the inspectors in under-reporting cases. A Government of India Committee on Labour Welfare, 1969, commented that, 'whatever be the rules and the legal provisions on paper, the purpose of law is fulfilled only if it is administered well'. It is here that we feel concerned about the health of workers and medical care provisions particularly since the introduction of petrochemical and allied industries on a progressive scale'.²⁰

Taking the period between 1979-80, if we look at just three occupational diseases—byssinosis in cotton industries, asbestosis among asbestos workers, and lead poisoning among workers handling batteries, on the basis of surveys conducted on sampled industries—estimates can be made of the total quantum of these diseases, since the size of the work force in these industries is known. These estimates are of the order of 37,181 cases of byssinosis and 1,489 and 511 affected workers for asbestosis and lead poisoning respectively.²¹ Against this total of 39,181 cases of just three occupational diseases we have an official statistic of a total of 98 reported cases of occupational diseases. A break-up of these 98 cases shows that of the 22 notifiable diseases only 11 have been reported and that only eight states have been reporting cases over these four years.²²

Why does this state of affairs continue in spite of the remarkable advances that India has made in industrial and agricultural production since the early part of this century? To answer this question we examine the socio-economic variables identified earlier.

THE INDUSTRIALISATION PROCESS

The choices of particular products and the technologies they require carry within them the germ of occupational hazards. It is the nature of the overall production process that ultimately sharpens or blunts the edge of the hazard. We therefore outline India's overall industrial growth and thereby examine the choice it made for products, technologies, and production processes.

Products and Technologies

Industrialisation began in India in the middle of the nineteenth century with the building of the railways and the emergence of textile and jute mills. Until the end of the century, the major employers of the labour force were the cotton and jute mills, the railways and the coal mines. According to the Royal Commission's report, by 1929 the pattern of industry had changed somewhat. Cotton, jute and the railways remained as very large employers but plantations of tea, coffee and rubber had also become major employers. Manufacturing units had expanded into steel, general engineering, paper, cigarettes, armaments and foundries. Mining had expanded into manganese and mica, and a nascent construction sector had begun to emerge to support the

industrialisation process. In addition, an 'unregulated' sector was being drawn into the market economy, a sector made up mainly of traditional activities in bidi, shellac, carpet, wool, mica, and match manufacture

The Second World War contributed enormously to the growth of industrial production and employment. All kinds of new industries were coming into existence. While the plantations, cotton, jute and the railways were all still big employers the manufacturing industry had grown beyond steel and engineering, etc., into cement, sugar, shipbuilding, chemicals, dyes and beverages. The composition of the unregulated sector was about the same, but it too had grown enormously to meet the war demands. Thus on the eve of independence India had a small but significant industrial sector.

Industrial growth in the post-independent period has had its own ups and downs. Over the first fifteen years the industrial sector expanded rapidly, particularly after 1957. From 1965 onwards there was a significant decline in growth rates but the overall expansion continued.²³ From 1955 onwards newer industries like chemicals, fertilisers, metals, power, petroleum and coal, machinery and minerals, which had just started in the fifties, became prominent. In 1982-83, these new industries were absorbing 55 per cent of the total investments in industries in the public sector.²⁴ And if we look at the index of industrial production (Table 3) these industries still remain the most important groups of manufacturing industries.

This changing pattern of industrial production and expanding work force had its own implications for the health of the workers. For example, industries like textiles, jute and mining had mechanical and dust hazards and their intrinsic dangers were combined with the insanitary conditions in which workers were forced to live. The introduction of machinery, especially high-speed machines, created higher risks of accidents while the chemical, fertiliser and petroleum industries brought in the risk of genetic diseases, chronic poisoning and ecological destruction. Table 4 summarises the possible dangers caused by the different groups of industries as they evolved over time. The total work force also expanded as industry diversified and their associated hazards increased. In 1892 the total number of workers employed in industry was 316,816 according to the report of Labour Investigation Committee.²⁵ By 1929, 1,166,000 workers were reported to be working in the industries reporting figures under the Factories Act 1948 (which itself had been amended to bring factories employing more than 20 persons under its purview as compared to the minimum of 1,000 persons in 1881). With the demands on production caused by the Second World War, employment opportunities expanded further and the work force increased to 2,436,312 by 1946.²⁶ By 1968 it was estimated to be 16,330,000²⁷ and the 1981 Census estimates the total work force at 222.3 million (Table 5). This increasing population was constantly being exposed to increasing and varied health hazards.

Table 6 provides frequency rates of industrial injuries in different types of industries over time. These data are limited due to avoidance of reporting by employers and poor coverage by factory inspectors. This is obvious from Table 7 which shows the degree of decline in the proportion of registered factories undergoing inspection.

Table 6, despite its limitations, shows an interesting relationship between the pattern and direction of industrial growth and work-related injury. The textile industries appear to be the most hazardous. Next come industries manufacturing metal products, transport equipment, wool, silk and synthetic fibres, machinery and tools, gas and steam, non-metallic minerals, basic metals and alloys, wood, electrical machines and paper printing, chemicals and coal. Frequency rates of 11-68 injuries per lakh man days worked in these industries are evidence of the risk that workers have to face. As these are also the major industries which have expanded in independent India, the problem of hazards they create acquires greater significance. Yet another fact is that the frequency of injury in textiles, metal products and non-metallic mine product industries has increased over the years. Even in those major industries where there is some decrease over time, frequency rates have remained above 15 in 1981 (paper printing, basic metals, machinery, and wood industries).

As some sort of comparative assessment of the extent of hazards, it is interesting to note that between 1961 and 1970, the injury frequency rate for manufacturing industries in the USA rose from 1.2 to 1.5 disabling injuries per lakh man hours. It was estimated that, even with such low rates, 14,000 workers were killed and 22 lakh seriously injured every year as a result of accidents on the job. Similarly, while occupational diseases are also less well-documented in the US, it was estimated that at least 3,90,000 workers are disabled and 1,00,000 killed by occupational disease every year.²⁸

The evidence collected so far brings out the following trends:

- 1) There has been a significant increase in the industrial work force and a consequent increase in the population exposed to industrial work hazards both in terms of injuries, diseases, and death.
- 11) Since most statistics collected by commissions, investigations and official recording systems (and policy decisions) concern themselves with trends in the organised sector, the unorganised sector, though increasing, remains ill-understood especially as far as its health status is concerned.
- 111) The expansion of industries and higher growth rates have not necessarily meant better working conditions. The risk to the health of the workers has in fact increased. This is so because hazards in each industry have increased on account of higher-speed machinery, use of new and unfamiliar technology and intensification of work. The only exception to this trend is the

petroleum, rubber and plastics industries, where the rates have declined over time but still remain high.

- iv) There has been a significant diversification in industrial production. This has meant new risks for the workers. For instance, while plantation and mine workers were exposed earlier to the vagaries of the weather, dangerous working conditions and maltreatment from their employers, the emergence of heavy engineering, steel, nuclear energy and chemicals has increased exposure to heat, noise, machinery and chemical and radiation hazards.
- v) The new industries have emerged and expanded at a much higher rate of growth as compared to the older industries. They are, in fact, more dangerous to health, as shown by their records of accidents and injuries.
- vi) The traditional industries like textiles and jute, which largely suffered on account of competition and were poorly maintained, have the highest rates of accidents and injuries.

These trends point towards enhanced risks to the health of the ever-expanding industrial work force, divided into organised and unorganised sectors, but firmly wedded in the same economy. In addition to the rising risks within the industries, three factors may be identified which have much bigger ecological implications than ever before. Firstly, the chemicals industry began to develop more and more hazardous substances which were either unregulated (as in drugs) or whose toxicity was not controlled (as in pesticides and synthetics).²⁹ The logic of this led inexorably towards the Bhopal gas disaster.³⁰

Thirdly, there has been the growth of a synthetics and plastics industry based on naphtha. Apart from the raw material being non-renewable and the product being non-biodegradable (both with much larger environmental implications), the working conditions in this industry have a more adverse impact on workers, partly because of the nature of toxic chemicals involved, and partly because it is one of the sectors in which small-scale units predominate. Much the same is true for the fast-growing electronics industry.

Production and Labour

We now examine the proposition that, while work has been becoming more dangerous as a whole for everybody, the manner in which technology is chosen and the operations decided, makes some work more dangerous than other work. Hence depending upon who is employed to work where and how, some workers are more exposed to hazard than others. Examples from Shahdol and its neighbourhood should make this clearer.

A. There are at least three different ways in which caustic soda can be made.³¹ One of them is the electrolytic process which uses a bed of mercury as one of the electrodes. A factory which opts for this

particular technology implicitly has to deal with three major hazards—from mercury as a toxic metal, from chlorine as a poisonous gas, and from hot brine as a corrosive fluid. This, in turn, identifies the most hazardous points in the production process. These are (a) where common salt is loaded into the storage godowns, (b) cleaning the saturators in which brine is prepared, (c) clearing the mercury cells; (d) preparing the slaked lime from lime to absorb the excess chlorine, (e) handling the chlorine storage cylinders, and (f) desludging operations.

In the factory in which Nathuram worked (Caustic Soda Factory at Amlai), the technique chosen at all these danger points was of manual operations. None of the permanent workers were required to handle the stuff, and once given a permanent position workers even refused to do it. So all such operations were done by manual labourers hired under contractors. There were no protective devices whatsoever. Boots, clothes, goggles, masks, gloves were all absent—as was information on the nature of the hazards. Consequently, it was contract labour who were directly exposed to the greatest hazards. In this factory, of the total of 400 workers, over half were contract workers!

B The modern practice of manufacturing paper calls for digesting large quantities of bamboo for making cellulosic pulp. However, with the over-exploitation and disappearance of bamboo in many areas in recent years other practices have come into vogue. A new paper mill in southern Madhya Pradesh located near Champa has opted for agricultural crop residues and textile wastes as the raw material. Unlike bamboo, this material has to be sorted out from pieces of metal, dirt and stones before it can be fed into the production process. This is unhealthy work and this technology option creates a new hazard for the scores of women and children to whom this work is contracted out.

At the same paper mill the hot, alkaline pulp has to be transported from the digester to the pulp feed box through a filtration system. At a 'modern' plant this would normally be done through a pipe under pressure. But in the present case a technological 'innovation' had been introduced. The hot pulp was released from an outlet at the bottom of the digester on to an open hearth. Here workers separated the solid pulp from the digesting liquids manually with the aid of long paddles and sent the two on their separate ways by pushing them into different channels. Once again this work was done by contract labour.

C Another example is from a ceramics factory located near the steel mills of Rourkela.³² This unit supplies specialised bricks, each costing Rs 10, for lining the furnaces in the steel mill. So it has a fixed, captive market. The technical process for making the ceramic bricks consists of preparing the wet clay mixture, making the raw bricks, drying them in the sun, placing them in the firing kiln (charging), baking them at the right temperature, and withdrawing the final bricks from the kiln (discharging). To increase the production of such a unit one would either require a larger capacity in the existing kiln or another, second kiln. However, the owner achieved a technological 'breakthrough' by

another manner. He dramatically cut down on charging and discharging times. This essentially meant that the kiln would not be allowed to cool down sufficiently before the fired bricks were withdrawn and a new batch placed inside. In effect this meant that workers were going inside the kiln fetching and carrying bricks at temperatures near the boiling point of water. No safety gear whatever was provided and workers had to make do with rags tied to their hands and feet. And, as usual, these were all contract workers.

D. The yellow-ochre factory at Anuppur is a small unit which uses a hammer mill powered by a 75 H.P. motor to pulverise the yellow-ochre into fine powder. All other operations are manually performed, starting from unloading the raw material to finally filling and loading the gunny bags. Workers' ages range from 14 years to 30. They enter the factory brown and scantily clad in the morning and leave for home late in the evening yellow from head to toe, totally unrecognisable. They are given no protective devices and no medical check-ups. Except for those responsible for the machine, all other workers are casual or on contract. Those who fall sick are dropped unceremoniously and the factory owner has no responsibility towards them.

E. The paper mill at Amlai employs 1,700 permanent workers and double that number of casual and contract workers. While the highly mechanised jobs are handled by the permanent workers who are mostly skilled and semi-skilled, the casual and contract workers look after all the dirty work. The coal mines in Shahdol have two types of workers, skilled and unskilled. The unskilled, who work as loaders and helpers, are given the most dangerous and strenuous jobs. A large number of them are kept as casual workers by terminating their services before they complete the required 240 days of continuous employment that entitles them to demand permanent status. The same pattern is repeated even among the blue collar workers in all government departments: public works, irrigation, forests, public health, engineering, railways, even education. There are drivers and typists, operators and peons, who are still on temporary jobs after working for 15 years or more.

The use of casual and contract labour by employers, to get work done at low wages for longer hours without any responsibility towards these workers and to avoid labour trouble by changing contracts frequently, is not peculiar to Shahdol. This method of cutting administrative costs and maximising profits is a steadily increasing trend in Indian industries. Thus, despite the Royal Commission's³³ recommendations to abolish contract labour and the Labour Investigation Committee's condemnation of it in 1946,³⁴ this practice has been continued and refined by the employers. Though the amended Factory Act 1948 and Mines Act 1952 covers these workers by expanding the definition of a worker, given the conditions in which they work they are not always able to take advantage of the law which in itself is very sketchy as far as it applies to them.

The National Commission on Labour (1969) estimated a total of 21 million contract and casual workers in 1961 (which was equivalent to about 35 per cent of the total non-agricultural work force). It gave the proportions of contract workers in some of the industries (Table 8) and pointed out that industries like construction, bidi, handloom, tanneries, quarries, mines and jute depended heavily upon this category of worker. Since then, the unorganised sector has in fact grown faster and most estimates are that about half of all industrial workers are unorganised and belong to the contract, casual and temporary categories.³⁵ The 1981 Census adds yet another category of the marginal worker who gets work only for 183 days and raises the possible number of unorganised labour to over 50 per cent.

Up to now this paper has focussed on work hazards as a problem associated primarily with industry. But it is possible that agriculture, which provides work to 80 per cent of the population, may be causing more death and disease than industry in terms of the absolute numbers of workers affected. Here too, the technological choice is the important factor. Green Revolution technology has several linkages with developments in industry. The manufacture of agricultural equipment, tractors, pump-sets, fertilisers, insecticides and the generation of power are all closely associated with developments on the farm. All of them create their own hazards both in industry as well as in agriculture. In agriculture, as in industry, it is some sections of the work force, like the agricultural labour and small cultivators who directly handle machines and pesticides, who are the most affected by the associated work hazards.

The most hazardous substances, of course, are the various pesticides that are used indiscriminately in Green Revolution areas. In 1973-74 there were 51,772 tonnes of chemical pesticides being used in India while by 1983-84 it had doubled to 1,12,340 tonnes. Three of the widely used ones have been banned in western countries on account of their toxicity, these are BHC, DDT, and Parathion.³⁶ Yet, in India there are normally no safeguards required with their use. Bharat Dogra has reported a study in Gujarat that revealed that 'none of the labourers were provided with masks to prevent the inhalation of toxic chemicals. Goggles to protect the eyes were almost not available. Only 50 per cent of the workers took the precaution of covering their nose and mouth with a cloth. Besides 20 per cent of the workers did not wash their hands after completing the operations and of those who did, 64 per cent did not use soap, though washing with water alone is utterly inadequate'.³⁷

Production in Green Revolution areas is divided technically in a manner similar to what we have seen in industry. Thus, the tractor—probably the least hazardous work agent—is driven either by the farmer himself, or a member of his family, or a skilled and well-paid worker who can also maintain the machine. Mechanical operations like threshing are done by lesser paid labourers who are constantly

exposed to injury or loss of a limb. Workers in areas where the Green Revolution has succeeded are specially prone to such accidents,³⁸ 28 126) A slow death by pesticide poisoning is reserved specially for the low-paid labourers who do the manual jobs, from weeding to spraying and dusting to harvesting, at low wages.³⁹ Reports from the Green Revolution belt of Punjab indicate that the composition of this lowly-paid labour has drastically changed from local residents to migrant labour from Bihar brought, as often as not, under the contract system.⁴⁰ However, there is not enough data in India to show the overall impact of pesticides on the health of agricultural workers.

Our analysis of the organisation of labour around technologies in the new as well as the older industrial units shows: (i) the technological options chosen have made some tasks in the division of the production process much more hazardous, (ii) that these tasks are generally given to unskilled contract and casual workers who have little bargaining power, (iii) that there is a strong tendency to devise less safe but quicker methods of production particularly in the small-scale units, (iv) that even the organised industries which are mechanised subcontract work to small-scale units, and thus depend on contract labour for the completion of many necessary tasks.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

It is by now well recognised that labour in India may be divided into three broad strata of permanent, temporary and contract. As we have tried to show in the previous section, this differentiation in labour generally parallels the differentiation within the production process and thus differential exposure to health hazards. We now proceed to examine if these three strata of workers also have different social origins.

In our study of Shahdol district (1984) it was clear that, in the industrial sector, while the skilled and semi-skilled workers come largely from middle and upper caste families (local as well as migrant labour) a large proportion of casual and contract labourers belonged to the tribals, Harijans and other lower castes. In our village surveys we found that even among tribals the economically better-off tribes (who had some hold on land and local contracts) were better represented in the unskilled work force of coal mines where wages were relatively good (Rs 800-1000). The other tribes mostly worked as coolies, construction workers, earth-movers and casual labour in other industries.⁴¹ The migrant labour in Shahdol is mostly from Bihar, U P, Bengal and the surrounding districts of M P.

The agricultural links of the labour force, its caste composition and social hierarchy have been noted at the national level as well. The Royal Commission made some pertinent observations on recruitment processes and on the social groups from which workers came. It observed that Indian factory operatives are nearly all migrants.⁴² The great majority of those employed were villagers, but not necessarily

agricultural. They were artisans of various kinds, though agricultural groups supplied the bulk of the industrial workers.

'Some factory workers, but far fewer than is frequently supposed, may have a direct interest in agriculture, in that they derive pecuniary benefit from it. More have indirect interests, in that members of that very variable group, the joint family, or other close relations have agricultural holdings. A large number still have a home and members of their own family in the village and the latter may secure an income from agricultural work'.⁴³ Thus it indicated in 1931 the landless and marginalised class character of those who migrated to cities in search of work when they were reduced to penury in a bad agricultural season due to loss of land, indebtedness, uneconomical land-holdings, rising rents, etc.

Among the non-migrants who constituted a small proportion of the industrial labour—found mostly in Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Nagpur and Madras—an appreciable number of employees were either weavers or belonged to the depressed classes.⁴⁴ The desperation of these uprooted migrant families and their very low social status is obvious from the methods of recruitment that were adopted by the factory owners who were not directly responsible for the engagement of the workers in most cases. This task was done by intermediaries known as 'sardars', or 'mistrys'. These jobbers had the power to engage and dismiss workers and the practice of bribes was common for both employment and reemployment. False promises of high wages, housing and short working hours were common methods of enticing labourers.⁴⁵ Das Gupta, in his study of Bihar and Bengal mine workers, shows movement of impoverished peasantry from Orissa, U P, Bihar, and the Central Provinces. In this industry, overwhelmingly Santhals, Bauris and other so-called aboriginal groups used to work in family groups consisting of husband, wife and children.⁴⁶ A similar process has been traced by him for plantation workers as well. Since in mines as well as plantations the areas covered were mostly uninhabited and local labour was not very keen to join due to poor wages and hard working conditions, 'the planters, mostly British, had to obtain labour from sources that are hundreds of miles away. Outright force and politico-legal mechanisms become of crucial importance in closing the gap between demand and supply of labour. Allurement, deception and naked violence were used to recruit labourers and transfer them to the tea districts'.⁴⁷

This social image of an impoverished working class being formed by the subsistence-seeking landless, unemployed, marginal tribals and peasants who could not stand the pressures of the forces of production, and the artisans who lost in competition to the growing industries is also evident in the report of the Labour Investigation Committee in 1946. 'Our factual survey shows that most of the workers in industrial towns are landless labourers', and that 'the village and joint family have been a bulwark of social security for the industrial worker'.

'The recruitment process however has changed in factories in favour of direct methods through notices and factory gate selections' . 'In some places, one can see large queues of work-beggars gathering in morning hours' ⁴⁸ In the mining industry the intermediaries continued to provide the labour force but the earlier practice of providing miners with small patches of land was condemned as it was used to keep workers below subsistence levels. According to this report, in the Central Provinces, as well as in most plantation areas at least 10 per cent of the workers were tribals and mostly drawn from the Central Provinces, Orissa and Bihar. In addition to the factory workers and the miners, yet another category that was duly recognised by the Royal Commission as well as the Labour Investigation Committee was the category of contract labour. According to the latter, 'the contract system enables the principal employers to escape most of the provisions of the Labour Acts, specially the Factories Act, the Payment of Wages Act, the Maternity Benefit Act, etc' ⁴⁹ Labour investigation committee quotes Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee as well as Bombay Textile Labour Enquiry Committee, both of which said that employers as well as the contractors exploited the helpless position of contract labour and that this largely exploited section of the labour force thus belonged to the most oppressed among the deprived ⁵⁰

Lambert has shown that over the three decades since independence, the percentage of permanent labour in the labour force has expanded and in centres like Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Poona, Coimbatore and Madras, they have been joined by significant numbers of urban residents. Even then the new and the older migrants still constitute the bulk of the labour force and point towards the essential social process—migration from rural areas—which continues to swell India's major cities ⁵¹

The migrant character of a large chunk of the industrial labour is a feature pointed out by all those who have researched the industrial sociology of India. Morris in his study of Bombay pointed out that 'groups of landless labourers and submarginal peasants constituted a large part of the proletarian labour force of the Bombay cotton mills' ⁵² Lambert⁵³ and Seth⁵⁴ in their detailed studies of factories of Poona and Rajnagar have shown that the majority of the labour force was migrant. While some had completely severed their links with their villages, others still continued to go back. This was especially true of the semi-permanent labour, who often had links with land and in the periods of unemployment were forced to return to the security of the joint family. The urban component of this force came largely from merchant and professional backgrounds as a response to higher demands for skilled labour in newer (more mechanised) factories, and as a result of the general pressures of unemployment. Thus the unskilled migrants were gradually forced to enter the casual and contract labour markets. These researchers also show the dominance of upper and middle castes over managerial, supervisory and highly skilled jobs,

while the lower and the scheduled castes ended up as semi-skilled and unskilled permanent and temporary workers. Yet another aspect that these studies highlight is the function of kinships and social connections which played a crucial role in recruitment, promotions and mobility. Similar findings have been reported by Vaid from Kota, an industrial town in Rajasthan.⁵⁵ There too, Brahmins dominated in the supervisory positions and clerical jobs while Harijans constituted the bulk of workers, even though in this study, Harijans constituted 41.4 per cent of the work force. Most workers were migrants. For Punjab, Singh pointed out the nascent occupational solidarity among workers which, though emerging, had not fully developed among the newly migrant workers. Kinship, caste, village, region and religion continue to be effective and have tended to divide the workers.⁵⁶

The fact that one's social origin restricts one's chances for better jobs is also evident from the data presented by the National Sample Survey (Table 9). While 68 per cent of the Brahmin households surveyed were engaged in trade and commerce as well as the administrative and professional services, among the lower and scheduled caste households only 41 per cent and 33 per cent respectively were similarly engaged. In industries the latter two were better represented in the labour force, and the scheduled caste households had the highest percentage in construction and sanitary services.⁵⁷

Holmstrom, in his recent work, while confirming the above trends, has shown that even among the scheduled castes while the Bombay-based Harijans opted for factory jobs, the migrant Harijans (largely from the south) joined the strata of casual labour, especially construction labour. He highlights the linkages between different strata of labour which made them into one interlinked network. The wage differences however, were striking. The big firms on an average paid higher wages (Rs 500 per month in a textile mill as against Rs 200 in a small-scale unit using the same technology). The factory workers in general earned twice as much as a worker in the unorganised sector, for which minimum wages had little meaning.⁵⁸ This differential is almost the same as that which existed in the 1950s when unskilled workers earned Rs 33 per month and factory workers Rs 50 per month.⁵⁹ If at all there has been any change it has been against the interests of the unskilled casual worker.⁶⁰

This differential in wages is indicative of the relatively more vulnerable position of casual labourers who are also labelled as 'unskilled'. This section of the labour force, significant in size, contributes the maximum labour and receives the minimum returns. These are workers whose work ranges from boot-legging, rickshaw-pulling and construction work to being coolies, household help and unskilled labour. They live in the most degrading of environments and have little access to any kind of services. This has been amply shown by Singh et al, Majumdar and De Souza. They have underlined the congested living, poor environmental sanitation, paucity of water

supply, and extremely poor housing conditions which are all detrimental to health.⁶¹ High rates of malnutrition and communicable diseases go hand in hand with low incomes and poor food intake as shown by Majumdar and Radhakrishnan.⁶²

The case of construction workers is particularly revealing in this context. As a report on the construction workers employed during the ASIAD Games at Delhi⁶³ indicated, those who built all the facilities for holding the Games were themselves denied even the most basic facilities. Brought by contractors in virtual bondage from their homes in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, these labourers were kept in camps surrounded by armed thugs. They had no base to return to, as almost all were from impoverished families in debt slavery. The number who died or were injured during the construction work still remains unknown. This was not unique to ASIAD workers alone. Inhuman treatment of people living in slums in the major cities of India is well reported. Inder Mohan writing about Delhi's slum clearance schemes reports, 'No legal notice was ever served to them. In order to avoid the possibility of stay-orders from courts, these people were forcibly removed at night or during the monsoon or on a holiday. Trucks accompanied by police vans would, without due warning, surround their clusters, and carry them with or without their meagre belongings to the new sites. Here they would be literally dumped on a bare piece of land with the sky over their heads'.⁶⁴ Similar reports of uncertainties and dehumanising conditions of life for the workers living in slums are also available from Bombay, Bangalore and Calcutta.⁶⁵

Those labourers who come into a city during the early phase of construction are offered no facilities. So they tend to occupy little plots of uninhabitable land and gradually make them somewhat habitable by levelling, filling and building up some facilities. But as the city expands this land becomes prime estate too and gradually the labour is pushed out again to the fringes of the settlement through devious methods of slum demolitions, evictions, bustee improvement, etc. Thus, within the battle for survival, the environmental coordinates of health keep sliding downwards.

In this social hierarchy, yet another group that needs to be specially mentioned is that of women and children. They constitute a significant group, specially in agriculture. In agriculture women do more and harder work in all agricultural activities (except ploughing) but are paid less.⁶⁶ The report of the Rural Labour Enquiry in 1965 concluded that the reason children are absorbed into agricultural labour 'is the shortage of labour in the peak agricultural seasons'.⁶⁷ They are paid less, almost one-third of what an adult male would get.

In the non-agricultural sector the proportion of women and children has declined over the years but still they make a significant proportion of the industrial labour force in certain specific industries, for example bidi, carpet, slate mining, etc. According to Mamdani the most important characteristic of the structure of casual employment is that

it allows for the employment of women and children to a far greater extent than does modern industry⁶⁸ Thus small restaurants, hotels, brick kilns, cotton ginning, weaving, matchstick manufacture, etc are yet other examples of industries employing children While all official commissions and investigations have favoured abolition of child labour, their numbers in the work force have kept swelling, so much so that today the government proposes to introduce a Bill on Child Labour to control the misuse of children⁶⁹

The following trends can be easily discerned from these data

- (i) That the majority of the Indian labour force has been created out of the impoverished peasantry who migrated to the cities, and that this migration continues to expand the work force
- (ii) That among the migrants, the ones with better bargaining power, due to their skills and social links (mostly the cultivators from the middle and upper castes) dominate in the permanent and temporary jobs in industries
- (iii) Though the landless labourers coming from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are placed in all the three strata, it is the contract and casual work which largely falls to their lot
- (iv) That though the above pattern is the normal picture, each city has its variations depending upon its specific historical background
- (v) That while there is a definite link between different strata of the labour force through village, caste and regional links, some of these same traditional links also act as dividers of the working class in a developing economy where competition for survival is intense
- (vi) That women and children maintain their lower status in work just as they do at home

It appears, then, that the overall social stratification penetrates deep into the labour force Links with land, patterns of migration, education and skill determine which level of labour one enters, and where in that level one is placed The implications of stratification for health are that, given the scarcity of facilities, those who are privileged and control resources, also control the facilities The classes at the bottom, who have no control and no access, are deprived of even the basic minimum facilities of life This is true whether it is health, housing, sanitation, educational facilities, or employment, as shown by Banerji,⁷⁰ Zurbrig,⁷¹ Djurfeldt et al,⁷² and Qadeer⁷³ Though these studies focus on the rural stratification, the case of the labour force is not different Their social inequality has serious implications for their health not only at the work place but also at home This is so because, as we have seen, skills and education and hence job-definitions of the workers depends on the socio-economic background they come from The more depressed their origins the more likely they are to take unskilled jobs and jobs that no one else takes because of the associated hazards This becomes self-perpetuating because the less their ability to resist

these jobs, the more disadvantaged they will become by constant exposure to health hazards and the ensuing illnesses and injuries. Their place in the social hierarchy also determines their access to basic amenities for life like housing, drinking water, medical facilities, education, etc. which, as we know, are inaccessible to those at the bottom.

WELFARE SERVICES

Though welfare of the worker covers a wide area from working hours and bonus to housing, health, and safety, we are able to examine here only the latter three.

Independent India

The poor working and living conditions of the workers in the early phases of industrialisation have already been noted. Over time, grudgingly, their right to live at least at subsistence levels was granted to them when some employers and their patrons in the government realised that this might be a way to avoid labour problems and enhance efficiency and regularity. The Royal Commission noted that investment in health does not only promote the well-being of workers but 'is bound to produce great economic advantage'.⁷⁴ This enlightened self-interest, however, remained an unattractive proposition for most employers who continued to neglect workers' welfare in the absence of adequate pressure from either the government or workers. We examine below the state of safety, housing and health care in Indian industries from 1929 to 1947.

Safety Inspection The work of inspectors who were responsible for reporting of accidents and working conditions, was praised highly by the Royal Commission. By 1929 there were 39 inspectors for eight provinces with 8,129 factories. Given the size of the factories, these were pronounced adequate by the Commission.⁷⁵ This initial complacency gave way to some official concern in the 1940s. According to the Labour Investigation Committee, 'Our broad finding is that owing to the *comparatively less hazardous nature of Indian industries* (emphasis ours), the incidence of accidents is on the low side. However, this fact is to some extent counter-balanced by the comparatively unsatisfactory provision of safety devices in most industries. The Factories Act and Mines Act, no doubt lay down a number of provisions in respect of safety and prevention of accidents. However, it appears that these provisions are not always observed by employers, and owing to inadequate inspection are not always properly enforced'.⁷⁶ The Committee unfortunately provides no information on the Inspectorate.

Housing The records of cities like Bombay, Madras and Karachi for the 1920s show that 70-90 per cent of the workers lived in one-room tenements with families of 6 to 9. The total neglect of ventilation,

latrines and other facilities and provision for drinking water were specially appalling. The 'bustees' of Bengal and the 'chawls' of Bombay had acquired their notorious reputation early in the industrial history of these cities and Kanpur, Coimbatore and Madras were hardly any different.⁷⁷

In 1931 the Royal Commission had declared the older mill chawls of Bombay as 'detrimental to the health of their occupants' and 'fit only for demolition'. They had commended the 207 new concrete chawls built by the government of Bombay while at the same time hoping that 'this plan will not be copied in any future housing scheme', primarily because of 'the large expenditure involved'. But in spite of the Commission's approval, workers were reluctant to inhabit these new chawls. The Commission noted, 'never more than 50 per cent of the 16,524 rooms have been occupied since they were made available in March, 1929'.⁷⁸

The Labour Investigation Commission of 1946, writing 15 years later, found that the old private chawls were still in existence and echoed that they were 'fit only for demolition', and further reported that the 'new' ones had not only been occupied but that the average population of each room was 10 adults (2 children being taken as equivalent to 1 adult)—'a strikingly large number'.⁷⁹ Till 1946, according to the Committee, the majority of workers were provided with houses either by the employers, who sucked back large chunks of the wages that they paid as rent, or by private contractors, on very high rents. In plantations the conditions were worse. For example, in Assam about 90 per cent of the houses were mud houses without any sanitary facilities. In addition, access to workers' quarters was prohibited to all except the workers. They were kept almost as captives and in the Coorg and Mysore coffee plantations labourers were housed 'worse than cattle'.⁸⁰

Health Care Till 1940s public health and medical services for industrial workers were largely provided by the provincial health services—but their structures were too weak to take care of the additional needs of industrial workers. With an over-burdened medical service in most central cities, the growth of industries only added to the problem of medical services, specially since the employers did not consider it necessary to provide medical facilities to their industrial workers. According to the Royal Commission's Report, 'medical facilities have not expanded with anything like the necessary rapidity to meet the needs of the increased populations and the municipal medical institutions are incapable of serving more than a proportion of those in their vicinity'. The Commission found that Angus Jute Mill Company and Tata Iron and Steel Company were among the very few who provided health facilities to their employees.⁸¹ The Commission accepted the principle of employers' responsibility to finance medical facilities but took a pragmatic view of the problem. It

condoned the employers by saying that such large population migrations cannot be handled in such a short time

The Labour Investigation Committee, while accepting the principle of employer's liability, put forward another view. It said, 'Society as a whole must share the responsibility for industrial development with all its attendant evils and to that extent must be regarded as liable to bear a part of the cost of medical facilities for hazardous and uncomfortable employment'⁸² It thus proposed that the State, the employers, and 'perhaps even the workers' should share the responsibility of the employers under law. The report mentions ten companies which were providing medical facilities to their workers by name but gave no information about the rest. Among these however, Kolar Gold Field Hospital did not treat the families of the Indian workers though free treatment was given to Europeans and Anglo-Indian staff and their families. The Indians had separate wards and also the equipment used for them was inferior.⁸³ The evidence collected by the Committee shows clearly the dissatisfaction of workers regarding services for treatment of tuberculosis, lung diseases and maternity problems.⁸⁴

The reports of these two official enquiries not only highlight the precarious living conditions, paucity of safety arrangements and medical facilities, but also indicate a trend. Despite lip service, the tendency to get maximum work output without any consideration for workers' welfare was the general trend with very few exceptions. This neglect was well reflected in the high rates of injuries and deaths among workers (Table 1). It can be concluded then, that till 1946, neither the government was interested in pressurising the employers, nor were workers' organisations strong enough to force them to change their policies.

Post Independent India

After independence, the national government took up the recommendations made by the previous labour commissions and enquiry committees and initiated schemes to improve the working and living conditions of workers. Instead of reviewing these schemes, we will examine the following three activities of the State and attempt to assess the directions that welfare activity has taken after independence.

- 1) Strengthening factory inspection
- 11) Provision of housing facilities
- 11) Provision of health care services

Safety Inspection Each state has an Inspectorate under the Chief inspector of Factories. It has Inspectors with medical and engineering backgrounds who are expected to keep full records of the occupational diseases, injuries, working conditions and factory sanitation. They are also expected to do educational and supervisory work and to see that

the various Acts regarding labour are being effectively implemented. If necessary they bring the offending employer to court. In areas where there are no inspectors, the District Magistrate can take action against an offending employer.

Table 10 shows the relative coverage of factories in different states from 1946-62. The prescribed coverage is 150 factories per inspector. It is obvious that even after fifteen years of independence none of these states were complying with the limit of 150 factories per inspector. The conditions in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal were specially poor. This poor coverage of factories by the Inspectorate matches well with the frequency rates of injuries for the given period, which were high and also increasing over the years (Table 1).

We have already noted the low levels of factory inspections (Table 10), a reflection of poor staffing of the Inspectorates as well as their indifferent functioning in which taking bribes from factory owners in return for complicity and other forms of corruption are not infrequent.⁸⁵ Moreover, the inadequate structure of the law itself provides many loopholes for employers. Data on convictions (Table 11) indicates that not more than 12 per cent of the registered factories have had convictions after 1951 if it is assumed that a factory had been convicted only once (otherwise the percentage would decrease further). Secondly, for these years (except for 1951 and 52) only in 16 to 24 per cent of the convictions, the cause was either lack of safety or health or violation of sanitary laws. Thirdly, only 2 per cent of all registered factories were convicted for reasons of health and safety, a proportion which leaves out the majority of the offenders of health and safety laws even from among the registered factories. The fact that convictions for safety do not really take care of the problems of accidents becomes clearer if we see the number of accidents which were compensated under the Workmen's Compensation Act over the same years (Table 12).

The data on the Inspectorate's activity regarding injuries and compensations to the workers all show a persistent disregard for the workers' safety on the part of the Inspectorates. It becomes clear then, that the guardians of safety are not as careful as they are supposed to be and that more often than not, workers have to defend their own rights.

Housing. Workers' housing was another activity taken up by the Government of independent India in view of the poor housing conditions prevailing earlier. The policy makers proposed 'provision of adequate housing for workers to the extent of the resources, both manpower and material, that can be made available for this service'.⁸⁶ Greater emphasis was given to plantations where conditions were subhuman. The Central Government started a number of schemes to promote housing activities of the states, employers and workers. Thus in the 1950s the amount of subsidy to states was 50 per cent, and to workers'

and employers' cooperatives 25 per cent. The amount of loans sanctioned was also 50 and 37 per cent respectively of the total cost.⁸⁷ Five major housing schemes came into being in the 1950s: (i) the Subsidised Industrial Housing Scheme 1952, (ii) the Low Income Groups' Housing Scheme 1954, (iii) the Subsidised Housing Scheme for Plantation Workers, (iv) the Slum Clearance and Improvement Scheme, and (v) the Village Housing Schemes. Three of these were for urban workers.⁸⁸

Under the Subsidised Industrial Housing Scheme, from 1952-53, grants for 21,421 tenements were sanctioned, but until 1953 only 4,124 tenements were completed.⁸⁹ Bombay, despite its long history of industrialisation, could boast of only 5,113 tenements by 1952-53 under the State Housing Scheme. The number of constructions under this scheme have been low, and the backlog cumulative. While 1,24,834 houses were constructed out of 1,55,521 sanctioned in 1961,⁹⁰ until 1980 out of the 2,51,018 houses sanctioned only 1,85,580 were constructed.⁹¹

Similarly, in major industries, though there have been claims about housing provisions, the situation is dismal. An example of this is the textile mills, where, in Delhi and Calcutta, the provision of houses to only 40 per cent of the workers was reported in 1953.⁹² This proportion of coverage has remained constant over the years until 1980. In Bombay only 14 textile mills out of the 48 provided housing for workers and even these did not cover all their workers.⁹³ The performance of the other two urban schemes is also poor. In 1980 under the Low Income Group Housing, out of 3,38,33 houses sanctioned only 42,853 houses were constructed and in the Slum Clearance Scheme only 43,627 were completed. The situation in the plantations and the mines was slightly better.

The very slow rate of construction not only created backlogs but the sanctions themselves were inadequate given the vastness of the problem. Though paucity of data does not allow a complete quantitative assessment of the problem, the qualitative aspects were adequately pointed out by the National Commission on Labour.⁹⁴ Its report said that the private chawls had not disappeared and that for all the tenements built either privately, or by the mills, or by public bodies, conditions had 'deteriorated beyond what they were reported in the Royal Commission' and that 'overcrowding became the rule', and 'sanitation and ventilation were depressing'.⁹⁵

Many independent observers have described the conditions in areas where workers live⁹⁶ and, apart from a few exceptions like the labour colonies and townships at places like Jamshedpur and Bangalore, the vast majority of workers and their families continue to live in houses and slums that are ill-ventilated, unhygienic, insanitary, and ill-provided with civic amenities.

Health Care India after independence took up the Adarkar Commission's⁹⁷ recommendations and concretised them by enacting the Employees State Insurance (ESI) Act 1948. It was amended in 1951 and

implemented in 1952, with a second amendment in 1966⁹⁸ Under this law all factories (as defined in Factories Act) and work places employing 10 or more persons, under a given region, were to be covered except for seasonal factories, coal and mica mines, and railways (which have their own health services). The ESI Act 1948, covers the insured workers and their families for sickness, maternity, employment injury, disability and dependancy

Starting from Delhi and Kanpur, with 12 lakh population insured under its cover, the scheme now caters to a worker population of 71 lakhs⁹⁹ This expansion, when seen against the total work force that exists and needs to be covered (Table 5), becomes an almost insignificant figure In addition, the services themselves are confined only to medical treatment, and do not include public health (Table 13)

The medical facilities under the scheme were reviewed by a special committee¹⁰⁰ which found the services inadequate and unsatisfactory Its major criticism of ESI was its poorly-staffed service dispensaries, the poor standard of its clinics and hospitals, the non-availability of drugs, and total lack of attention to preventive services

If the morbidity pattern among the insured persons is examined (Table 14) it is revealing to find that there have been hardly any changes in the incidence of diseases over the past 20 years Nutritional deficiencies and infectious diseases have continued to be the major problems, indicating poor environmental conditions It is worth noting that this is data from insured persons who, as we have seen, are among the better-off workers

Yet another feature of the scheme, noted by the National Commission of Labour in 1969, was that 'while the original pattern of the schedule was to take two-thirds of the burden of costs from employers and one-third from employees, by a curious arrangement the ratios were reversed by transitional provision'¹⁰¹

The ESI Scheme thus appears to be full of problems not only as regards the quality of its services, but also with regard to its distribution and access Like the first two welfare activities this too leaves out the poorest and the most needy workers

The national trends were well reflected in Shahdol as well, where contract and casual workers had no services at all Even among those workers who had access to facilities, differential access was clearly visible In one of the collieries in Shahdol we found that the water supply to the township was provided by pumping out the coal-mines' seepage water onto the surface This water was then allowed to settle with alum, chlorinated in a separate tank, and finally filtered through polythene filters But the water supply scheme had been built 25 years before, for a much smaller population Consequently, at the time of our visit we observed that chlorination was rarely being done and that just before the filtration unit another pipe had been led off by inserting a T-joint Filtered water was being supplied to the officers'

quarters while the labour colony had to make do with the unfiltered water supply provided through the inserted pipe

In another colliery township we found that almost 90 per cent of the miners interviewed (out of a sample of 10 per cent of the total) were consuming liquor and that over 30 per cent were heavy drinkers, i.e., they drank daily. On being asked why they drank at all 67 per cent of the loaders responded that they drank either to get rid of the coal dust or to get over their tiredness or both.¹⁰² It is understandable that loaders should complain of dust and strain because they work right at the coal face where the explosions take place, and have to do the back-breaking toil of loading the coal into tubs. We found that this belief that liquor removes coal dust from the body was quite widespread. The miners' wives subscribe to it and the managers and doctors reinforce it. Evidently, liquor was replacing better welfare measures like ventilation or water-sprinkling or adequate health care.

Housing was available only to the officials, supervisory staff, and some of the permanent workers (5-10 per cent). The coal mines and railways alone had their own system of providing medical care of some quality, and the rest of the industries either had an ESI coverage (as was the case for the paper mill, the thermal power station and the bauxite mines) or else left their workers to take care of themselves.

Inadequacy and differential access thus appear to be an important feature of welfare services for industrial workers. The ones who remain at the fringes and are denied access are none other than the contract and casual workers or those who work in household industries.

LAW AND ORGANISATION

Our attention was drawn to these two crucial factors in Shahdol by the action of the District Magistrate who in 1986 registered a case against the Paper Mill for polluting the river Sone and causing a public nuisance. While the charge was that effluents were being discharged into the river without being adequately treated, and the river water was consequently getting highly contaminated as confirmed by the State Pollution Board's report, the representatives of the mill argued that the effluents that they discharged were within the prescribed concentration, and that if the river did not have enough water over long periods it was not their fault. The law, as it stood, could not defend the interests of the public.¹⁰³ In the same group of factories was the Caustic Soda Factory, six of whose workers had clinical evidence of mercury poisoning, though none of them had sought legal help nor had the union taken this up as a collective issue due to lack of medical certificates and the non-availability of tests for blood levels of mercury.¹⁰⁴ These cases have forced us to look into the role that the law and trade union movements play in determining the health of the workers.

Role of the Law In the search for health and safety for the average worker, the law seems to offer a possible avenue for betterment of working and living conditions. There have been a series of labour laws aimed at ameliorating the conditions of the Indian worker. The major ones directly affecting health are the following:

1881	Factories Act, subsequently amended, most recently in 1948
1923	Mines Act
1924	Workmen's Compensation Act
1926	Employer's Liability Act
1934	Dock Labourers' Act
1941	Mines Maternity Benefit Act
1948	Employees State Insurance Act

The others are no less important as they cover issues like minimum wages, bonus and industrial disputes which are meant to ensure basic economic security, the very basis of health. Most of this legislation was passed long before independence, so its social history is a matter of some interest.

Some of the earliest labour laws introduced were clearly those which attempted to control the nascent, but somewhat undisciplined, working population. These laws—like the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859 and the Employers and Workmen's Dispute Act of 1860—gave powers to the masters to enforce work discipline and restrict the movements of the labourers. Subsequent legislation was enacted to introduce some degree of control in the terms and conditions of work, primarily to streamline the production process.¹⁰⁵ As a consequence, the evolution of these legislations was more a product of the contradictions within the social relations of production rather than the actual health needs of the worker. These social contradictions arose initially from the conflict between the Indian and the British capitalist interests, and later more directly from the conflict between the interests of the capitalists as a whole and the Indian working class. For instance, the Factories Act was passed in 1881 mainly to restrict child labour, but remained unenforced. It was amended in 1891 under pressure from Lancashire textile interests, concerned about cheap goods from India competing with their products.

In November 1888, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution that in view of the excessive hours of work in the cotton mills of British India, the provisions of the British Factory Act, in so far as they related to the employment of women and young persons and children, should be extended to include the textile factories in India. On that occasion even the European Chairman of the Madras Chamber of Commerce—a British organisation—was moved to write to the Government of India expressing his Chamber's disapproval of the interference of Manchester and its claims to have India labour conditions regulated by British standards. The proposal to extend British factory regulations to India, he caustically observed, was not

prompted by disinterested concern for India operatives. Indeed, the Madras Chamber of Commerce went so far as to attribute Manchester's action to jealousy, to the dictates of self-interest, and to the discovery that competition in India was becoming too severe for Lancashire.¹⁰⁶

The social practice in the early phases of industrialisation of revenge and punishment, and the ensuing Common Law to compensate a worker for damages if he could establish the 'fault' of the employer was later converted into the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1924. This Act underwent several amendments over time to keep pace with evolving social requirements and was eventually expanded in its scope as well as protective powers in favour of the worker.¹⁰⁷ But its basic pro-labour strength, which lay in making the employer liable for injury and disease suffered by the worker, also became its major vulnerability within the capitalist social fabric. In the name of collective responsibility and functioning and with the assistance of liberal intellectuals and administrators, the bourgeoisie set in motion the process of replacing the Workmen's Compensation Act by the Employees State Insurance Act of 1948. Curiously enough, this 'collectivity' not only levied a higher fee on the workers but also diverted all attention from the primary responsibility of industrialists for working conditions while work places continued to remain as enterprises for their private profit.

In general, legislation for workers' welfare was not something that industry took kindly to. For instance, half-a-century after the Factories Act of 1881 was passed, the Labour Enquiry Committee wrote in 1945:

During our ad-hoc surveys we found that so far as the larger industrial establishments were concerned, the Act was, on the whole being satisfactory observed, although there was a considerable evasion of its provisions in small and seasonal factories, particularly in respect of hours of work and overtime, employment of children, safety, health and sanitation. Sometimes, the managers of smaller factories in the mofussil tamper with the clock in order to get more labour out of their work people. Factory inspections and even surprise visits are of no avail in this matter as the managements generally get advance information about the arrival of the Factory Inspector. In some factories we also noticed that overtime work was not being paid for, according to the provisions of the Factories Act. In a few cases the managements maintained double registers. Our enquiries showed that its (child labour) employment in contravention of the Act was still widespread in match factories in South India, in glass, bidi and shellac factories, in tanneries, and in seasonal factories such as cotton ginning and baling and rice mills. In several chemical factories workers were found working without any masks or gloves. In several factories though a caution notice is put up against cleaning

the machinery while in motion, in practice the workers are often obliged to do so ¹⁰⁸

In spite of such legislation appearing to be against the direct interests of capital, the fact remains that labour laws were made, passed and modified by the legislatures. A review of the Legislative Assembly debates between 1922 and 1948 throws some light on the social forces which determined the evolution of labour legislation in India ¹⁰⁹ The following are some of the persistent trends as seen in these debates.

1 Labour laws were passed by the House only if the Government indicated its readiness to do so, right from the point of tabling the proposed legislation. If the Government did not favour a particular legislation, it was never passed by the House.

2 Most labour legislation was proposed for consideration by the House because of the motions by members of the Assembly or of the Treasury benches.

3 Those laws favoured by the Government were proposed only when, in effect, many industries or states had conceded similar demands at the local level. Thus workmen's compensation, maternity benefits, and health facilities for workmen were legislated for in the Assembly well after these rights had already been fought for and achieved by unions in different places within the country.

4 Where ILO Conventions came up for ratification before the House, the debates generally indicated a majority tendency to yield the minimum benefits to the workers. Modifications and alterations proposed by the members representing labour (like N M Joshi, Chaman Lal, B N Chaudhury, etc.) were always voted out.

5 The composition of the Assembly was such that the representation of workers was barely nominal and hence their interests were hardly protected. Constant resentment was, on the other hand, expressed by the representatives of the mill owners and landlords and Government over the domination of labour representatives and their viewpoints at the ILO. This resentment showed a noticeable decrease after the mid-thirties when the USA began to take an active interest in the activities of the ILO.

In the initial stages of industrialisation, the size, unskilled status, poverty and dispersion of the working population acted as severe constraints on its bargaining power. It was only after the turn of the nineteenth century that workers became organised enough to begin protecting and voicing their interests. A history of workers' struggles by Arnik shows that before 1920 the Government was either indifferent to or treated workers' protests as law and order problems and, in any case, tended to take the side of the interests of capital ¹¹⁰ Later on the Government came down heavily upon organised workers, often labelling their protests and struggles as 'a communist menace' ¹¹¹

Though many legislative changes have been introduced in independent India, the social relations between employers and

employees have remained the same. Incidents and reports between 1884 and 1986 show that matters have not changed much for almost a century. Even now child labour is exploited,¹¹² the practice of keeping bonded labour has not been resolved despite a long history of legislation,¹¹³ and laws relating to protection of health of the workers are so weak structurally that they are hardly effective.¹¹⁴ The Labour Enquiry Committee's observations still run true. 'In regard to working conditions, most of the employers rarely do more than what they are forced to do by law, and even this is evaded in several cases, while no extra measures to prevent the occurrence of accidents or secure better safety for the worker against dust, heat, etc., are usually adopted.'¹¹⁵

This picture of statutory provisions is generally true for all the labour laws. What is even more revealing is the situation with respect to areas in which legislation has not been made. As a signatory to the Treaty of Versailles and as a member of the League of Nations, India was automatically admitted to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919.

While the National Commission of Labour, 1969, felt that statutory provisions were adequate, it is interesting to note that at that time the Indian Government had ratified only 30 of the 128 Conventions adopted by the ILO. Of these, 15 were ratified before independence and 15 after. The Unemployment Convention of 1919 was later denounced. 37 Conventions were supposed to be not applicable to India. The Department of Labour and Employment informed the National Commission that '15 are considered to be impracticable of ratification under present conditions'. These dealt mostly with agricultural labour and fishermen. 46 Conventions, the Commission was assured, were being implemented, though formal ratification had not been found practicable because of their wide coverage. Of the 7 Conventions dealing with fundamental human rights, the Indian Government had ratified only 4. The 3 crucial ones unratified were (i) Abolition of Forced Labour, (ii) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, and (iii) Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining. The reasons given for non-ratification were curious. Since the Convention on Abolition of Forced Labour totally prohibited compulsory labour, this 'would prevent the state governments from requisitioning labour even in emergencies like scarcities, famines or floods'. Though the Convention concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise envisages complete non-interference by public authorities in the affairs of trade unions of all workers, except those engaged in armed forces and police, it was the view of the Government of India that certain 'restrictive measures are necessary under present conditions'. Similar views were expressed regarding the Convention concerning the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining. Similarly, of the 132 recommendations adopted by the ILO, the Indian Government found 13 to be impracticable. These related to Unemployment Provision, Hours of Work (Fishing), Unemployment

Insurance (Seamen), Social Insurance and Holidays with Pay (Agriculture), Minimum Wage (Family Undertakings and Underground work), Social Security and Medical Care for Dependents (Seafarers), Employment Injury Benefits and Invalidity, Old Age Survivors' Benefits ¹¹⁶

Given the fact that most of the provisions regarding agricultural workers, fishermen, forced labour, unemployed workers, and aged workers have not been considered 'practicable', it would be valid to point out that while the legal process does not generally favour the average worker in it's (non) implementation, a large section of the most disadvantaged working population does not even get legal protection. This is in conformity with the pattern we have tried to illustrate earlier in the previous sections.

Role of the Unions

In India the trade union movement is over fifty years old. Despite its slow growth and ups and downs it has been the major tool helping workers to get them their rights. The number of trade unions has increased from 2,766 in 1946-47¹¹⁷ to 35,750 in 1979 ¹¹⁸. The National Labour Commission (1969) estimated that only 5 per cent of the total workers were organised and asserting their rights. Our aim here is not to seek an analysis of the trade union movement as such but to attempt to understand its role in the struggle for health and safety within the limited data at our disposal.

To understand this aspect of the movement, it is important to keep in mind some very specific features of the Indian trade union movement. These can be summarised as:

- (i) Given the slow expansion of industries, the traditional basis of agriculture, and the large population seeking employment, the Indian trade union movement faced not only difficult organisational problems but also problems due to the workers' lower bargaining powers.
- (ii) The movement suffered because of splits within the Left parties in the sixties and the realisation of the parties of the Right that organising workers benefits the Right too.
- (iii) Socio-economic and political divisions have helped employers in attacking and weeding out trade unions with a working class ideology, and encourage the ones who act as lubricants and thereby maintain order and peace.
- (iv) A large majority of workers are still unorganised.

Despite these problems the movement has achieved over the years many benefits for the workers. 'They have secured an eight-hour day, legislation regularising factory conditions, compensation for accidents, timely payment of wages and limits on fines and deductions, etc' ¹¹⁹. Though these may not be obviously related to health, they are essential to it.

The Jharia coal mine strike, the general strikes of Bombay textile workers and plantation workers in Assam between 1920 to 1921 were some of the earliest struggles which focussed upon the poor living conditions of the workers. Following these struggles the Bombay Mill Owner's Association was persuaded to agree to some of the workers' demands which included compensation for employment injuries and medical aid during working hours.¹²⁰

The Labour Bureau provides information on disputes resulting in closures and lock-outs and cases compensated under the Workmen's Compensation Act 1948. In both of these, trade unions play an important role. We have already seen that under the Workmen's Compensation Act at least 50 compensations were won against every conviction under the Factories Act 1948 over the last three decades (Tables 11, 12). Table 15 shows the reasons for industrial disputes. It shows that the main issues have revolved around wages, bonus, retrenchments, hours of work and leave. However, health, which is a part of 'others', is not absent, though correct assessment is not possible because of clumping of data.

We can, therefore, say only three things. One, that health, though not central, has been an issue of struggle for unions. Two, health is a corollary of all the demands for better living that workers are making. Three, that at present even within the process of collective action it is only the organised sector that is taking advantage of the opportunities available. Thus, differential access to jobs and services is paralleled by differential strength to sustain any struggle.

PROPERTY, PROFIT, AND PROTEST: THE INTERWOVEN FABRIC

Our attempts to explore the economic and social determinants of the health of industrial workers have pointed out that in India expansion and diversification of the industrial sector has not necessarily resulted in improved living and working conditions and ultimately of the health of the majority of industrial workers. To the extent that data is available, the same appears to be true for agricultural workers.

In India's mixed economy, its so called 'socialistic' efforts to plan its development has had little impact in controlling the private sector, which not only responded to the needs of the market demands but also used the public sector for cutting down its own infrastructural costs.¹²¹ It was argued that expansion of industry and job opportunities is the first demand of development, without which achievement of health becomes mere talk. However, as we have seen, the actual pattern of growth which emerged neither provided adequate employment, nor did it make choices of products, technologies and production organisations which were conducive to the health of industrial workers. From this it is clear that the driving force behind Indian industrial growth has been the desire for profit maximisation and Indian 'socialism' has merely supplemented and mystified, this thrust.

This is obvious if we look at the movement of capital in India. In the pre-independence period capital moved out of the country and Indian industries were primarily confined to the production of raw materials to facilitate the profits of the British companies¹²²

In the post-independence period the market forces dominated the directions of growth. As has been outlined earlier owners of capital tended to move their assets from older industries into new ones when the older ones started yielding low dividends. Textiles are a good example where an expansion took place during the Second World War in response to the demands created by war. To begin with, there was no control on import of machinery. Production rose, and so did profits. 'The annual net profits of the Bombay textile firms rose by an average of about 30 million rupees in the 1937-1940 period to 700 million rupees in the 1942-45 period'¹²³ The enormous expansion was, however, followed by a decline after the war when not only did demand drop but the government also introduced licensing policies for the import of new machinery and price controls for the purpose of protecting the handloom industry. The result was that the original owners of the textile industries began to shift their capital and diversify into other areas in search of better profits¹²⁴ Thus we find that some of the most well-established industrial houses, founders of the oldest textile mills (like the Tata, Sri Ram, Birla, Sarabhai, and Mafatlal groups) are now producing steel, chemicals, machinery, sugar, pharmaceuticals and paper, thereby entering into areas where, by using more efficient and automatic machinery (as well as cheap labour), they could reduce costs, increase outputs, and make higher profits. It is also worth remembering that capital in the earlier phase had moved into textiles from rent and trade surpluses. What is important for us here is the fact that the industrialists seem to find easy ways of getting around government controls with the help of governmental infrastructures and subsidies and flourish in areas where profits are high, while the conditions of the workers in the older industries continue to deteriorate. Synthetics, consumer goods (cosmetics, television, fast food, etc.) and automobiles are the fast-growing industries. Their profits are high though their market is confined to a small upper-class elite. Hence, the logic of development of these industries is implicit in the way in which capital is possessed and decisions taken to maximise profits. The movement of capital from sugar cooperatives of Maharashtra into electronics in recent times, from glass bangles of Ferozabad into plastics, from plantations to light engineering (most British managing agencies like the Calcutta-based Shaw Wallace and Bird and Company), and from tobacco into tourism (like the Indian Tobacco Company) are all examples of the same process.

The only effective forces that appear to control the movement of Indian capital are the constraints of the international market and the interests of those who control it. A good example of this is the destruction of the sugar industry in the Third World in the face of the

expanding US interest in the sweetener market. Major policy decisions by a few US companies to take over the global market 'are made in the board rooms of a miniscule number of beverage companies with no consideration whatsoever for the millions of sugar workers and their families around the world' ¹²⁵ As a result, in the Third World, capital is forced to shift into other areas. Even the choice of new areas depends upon the decision of those who control the international market. For example, the trend to transfer automatic electronics-manufacturing activities to selected Third World countries by the US, Japan and Western Europe, in their effort to rationalise global resources, ¹²⁶ is an important factor in the shift of Indian capital from sugar to electronics. Other examples of similar forced decisions are the dumping of banned drugs ¹²⁷ and the transfer of lethal chemical industries ¹²⁸. Thus it is clear that the search for higher profits has not only led to the neglect of workers' welfare but in fact has created a situation wherein work hazards have increased and become more lethal.

This trend of rising health hazards together with the expansion and growth of the industrial sector does not match the experience of the West, where the health of workers became an important issue in the early phase of industrialisation, and where steps for safety and better health preceded organised pressure from the workers. For example, in Britain the Welfare movement started much before the Chartist movement and the liberals led by Edwin Chadwick fought for reforms with the understanding that it meant better returns for the bourgeoisie ¹²⁹. Despite being in a welfare state with socialistic pronouncements, Indian industrialists have not bothered to protect the health of their workers.

Some of the reasons why this has happened are as follows

Social Underpinnings

- (1) Given the slow rates of agricultural and industrial growth and a large population to begin with, the labour supply has never been a problem for industrial expansion. With this abundance of labour, it is relatively easy to find men, women and children to take up ill-paid and unsafe jobs. The more disadvantaged the social origin of the worker the greater is the compulsion to take up any job irrespective of its hazards.
- (11) Since subsistence is a function of the level of development of a society, the Indian industries have taken advantage of the poverty of the people. Though minimum wages are a part of the industrial norms, these norms are blatantly flouted. This is particularly true of the small establishments, household industries and seasonal industries.
- (111) This cheap and excessive supply of labour creates a situation where efficiency and the continuity of a worker lose their advantage in the face of the constant availability of labour. This is particularly so in those industries where a large amount of

work is done through unskilled contract or casual workers. The fact is that in India many jobs which should have been done by trained and skilled persons are given to untrained and unskilled people who do themselves more harm due to ignorance than is actually necessary.

Production Organisation

A special feature of Indian industry is the fast expansion of its unorganised sector where very small production units function under extremely undesirable conditions and produce for the market. In this sector wages are low, access to the law poor, and services of any kind conspicuous by their absence. This is a sector crucial in the maximisation of profits, for workers work for low wages and for longer hours. The size, the spread and the obscurity of such units itself indicates the high probability of neglect of the health and welfare of their workers. Even within an organised industry, the tendency is to so organise work that a few skilled workers handle the major technical operations while the rest of the jobs are done by contract workers or are sub-contracted out to other smaller industrial units. These are mechanisms evolved by the bourgeoisie to take advantage of the excess labour situation and devise methods whereby in the majority of the cases workers are forced to work at lower wages. At the same time, by this informal arrangement, this class of employers has absolved itself from the responsibility of looking after workers' welfare.

Divisions within Labour

The organisation of labour within a production system into permanent, temporary, and casual or contract, is not a simple division of labour. By giving workers differential rights, elements of conflict are introduced. This is crucial in a setting where job markets are small and unemployed labour is seeking to replace those in jobs at any wage if they get a chance. This technical division of the work force is further strengthened by taking advantage of existing social stratification. The traditional kinship, caste, linguistic, regional and religious patterns are encouraged to merge into the technical divisions of the work force. Furthermore, through the marginal provision of safety, housing and health care to the permanent workers a further gulf is created among categories of workers. This provides the employers a tool to 'control' and keep labour 'stable', as those who are in better positions find it difficult to give up their privileges in solidarity with others.

While all these elements act as potentially divisive forces, it is also true that the workers of all categories are tied together by the same bonds initially emanating from caste, regional, linguistic and kinship links, but which ultimately mature into bonds based on a sharing of the work place, which are essentially bonds of class. Thus, while on the one hand some of these factors strengthen the collective bond, on the other hand they also get used as a means of control and

containment. Employers make full use of this dialectic to keep workers' interests focussed on short-term economic issues and to thereby ignore the longer-term issues of working and living conditions.

Corporate Collaboration

Given the weaker economic position of India in the international market, very often deals are entered into with the more powerful corporate companies in which the terms go against the interests of the Indian worker.

There are two ways in which these deals influence the health status of workers: the first is the fact that dangerous industrial units and chemical plants like pesticides are being shifted to the Third World; the other is that joint production units are set up with the corporate body having major control over the technology. For example, in Bhopal the UCC (US) owned 50.9 per cent of the assets and was solely responsible for its technological design. UCIL remained dependent upon UCC to provide the information necessary to utilise the transferred technology. The UCIL in fact paid the UCC for continuous know-how and safety audits.¹³⁰ The fact that the technology transferred is mostly outdated becomes crucial to the health of the workers in view of the highly toxic materials that such units often handle. In the absence of proper safety mechanisms, accidents can and do become disastrous.

Reform Measures

With tremendous opportunities for controlling and manipulating, the Indian bourgeoisie have also used the legal and welfare systems to their own advantage. As described earlier, most legislation was introduced either through years of struggle on the part of the workers or when the interests of the capitalists were at stake.

The structure and implementation of this legislation leaves much to be desired since more often than not the onus of proving offence is left to the worker and the task is made almost impossible. It was observed by the National Commission on Labour that even when offending employers are punished, the punishment is so light that it hardly acts as a deterrent. As we have seen the law is broken or ignored more often than it is implemented. Studying court judgements against breach of contract of service over the early twentieth century, Siddiqi pointed out that 'law as interpreted by court which sided with the employers, was undemocratic because it restricted the workers' freedom and thereby compelled them to work against their wishes on terms unilaterally dictated by employers. The law thus contained many attributes of slavery'.¹³¹ This bias has persisted until today and is reflected in all laws enacted. For example, the Contract Labour (Abolition and Regulation) Act 1970 is more to control workers' movements than to enforce fair treatment from contractors. This compulsion extends into working under inhumane conditions.

In addition, the legal aspects of welfare have been so managed that the cost of maintaining health is passed over to the workers. Thus while in ESI, the workers pay two-thirds of their insurance, in some factories incentive schemes with productivity-based wages (or piece-rate production) induce workers to withhold information regarding injuries and not take action in the hope of earning more. This also ensures regularity of work since workers are induced not to be absent. This way the issue of health is sidelined.¹³² Welfare services are inadequate and available only to a very small percentage of workers. In the given set-up of medical case-detection, occupational diseases and public health are ignored and de-emphasised. For a large majority of workers the employers have no welfare responsibilities. This most vulnerable section of the workers depends upon its own resources and upon the general health services, both of which are insignificant for this class, given the overall structure of the society.

Union Activities

The Indian trade union movement had to grow against heavy odds of a slow-growing industrial sector, large numbers of pauperised workers with poor bargaining power, and political and social divisions which hamper its consolidation. Its major efforts, therefore, were in areas of basic rights of minimum wages, working hours, continuity, bonus, protection of jobs, etc. Though demands for better living and working conditions were taken up and disputes won in favour of workers, the incorporation of safety provisions and health care has not been a major concern over the years. The reasons for this are largely lack of information about dangers, the legal provisions which treat health hazards as an individual problem and not a collective issue (an understanding which is reinforced by employers), and the belief that asking for too many safety measures amounts to cutting profits to an extent that the survival of the unit itself, and ultimately workers' jobs, is threatened, with the result that health hazards should be regarded as inevitable. And, lastly, the helplessness and sheer struggle for survival against which hazards lose their horror for most workers (for whom every day is in itself a hazard) militate against any strong focus on the incorporation of safety provisions in the work place.

Despite the lower priority given to health issues by trade unions, it is obvious from the data presented earlier that while the employers do their best to undermine health issues, workers alone have been the main agents for redressal of whatever health and safety problems have been resolved. The law, their protector, has played only a marginal role in this, going more often than not against workers rather than helping them. It is also worth remembering that the gains of the trade union movement, although not overtly concerned with health, are essential to adequate health. The Bhopal disaster has dramatically focussed attention of the issue of safety and health.

Whether trade unions will take up this fight with increased vigour is yet to be seen

These, then, are the social coordinates of workers' health which reveal it to be not merely dependent on medical technology but in fact related to various socio-economic parameters. What is important is the way in which these parameters are ordered. Workers' health is thus strongly affected by decisions about the choice of product, the choice of technology, and the choice of work force to operate the technology on the one hand, and on the other, by social processes like welfare movements and legal interventions, all ultimately linked to the nature of social stratification and the demands of profit motive and private ownership. In the Indian situation, neither the demand of profit motive nor private ownership is expressly concerned with the interests of the workers. The most important force that could and does act to improve the scope for workers' health is the capacity to organise and intervene for those choices which are the most conducive to their overall health. Two issues need to be recognised for this kind of intervention.

Firstly, trade unions of organised workers have not demonstrated much initiative in the issues of health and safety in the past because of the obvious constraints that bind both workers as well as their unions and make economic issues the focus. However, in the recent past, some unions have begun taking an interest in these issues and researching, documenting and acting on them. Whether this signals a coming change in the consciousness of workers and citizens, brought about by events like the Bhopal gas leak, remains to be seen.

Secondly, a change towards better health will not merely come about by asking for higher compensation, or higher pay for dangerous work, or better safety alone. Since, as we have tried to show, these are factors inextricably linked into the web of capitalist exploitation and profiteering in India, the struggle for better health will have to be linked to the struggle for different technologies, for different work organisation, for different products, and for different distribution patterns—in short, for a radically different social structure—which is a political task. The question is, therefore, can a political movement of workers remain divorced from these issues of health, safety, technology, employment and labour organisation?

Table 1
Industrial Injuries in Factories and Mines as
Frequency Rates Per 1000 Workers Employed

Year	<i>Injuries as reported under</i>			
	<i>Factories Act</i>		<i>Mines Act</i>	<i>Workmen's Compensation Act</i>
	<i>Fatal Injuries</i>	<i>Non-fatal Injuries</i>	<i>Fatal Injuries</i>	<i>Fatal Injuries</i>
1940	0.13	22.14	0.96	—
1941	0.13	22.47	0.87	—
1942	0.13	23.59	0.96	—
1943	0.14	24.14	0.94	—
1944	0.15	26.55	1	—
1945	—	—	0.79	—
1946	0.09	25.74	0.65	—
1947	0.11	28.73	0.69	—
1948	0.1	30.96	0.64	—
1950	0.1	29.11	0.6	—
1951	0.09	29.84	0.77	0.28
1952	0.1	35.46	0.81	0.28
1953	0.1	39.96	0.65	0.36
1954	0.1	36.21	0.72	0.32
1955	0.1	42.44	0.64	0.31
1956	0.09	44.47	0.53	0.27
1957	0.12	42.66	0.4	0.25
1958	0.12	43.88	0.78	0.43
1959	0.11	44.23	0.47	0.28
1960	0.13	42.92	0.49	0.31
1961	0.14	45.53	0.51	0.26
1962	0.14	46.26	0.54	0.23
1963	0.13	47.67	0.49	0.28
1964	0.16	46.96	0.42	0.31
1965	0.14	49.11	0.79	0.33
1966	0.15	57.18	0.45	0.32
1967	0.13	47.63	0.43	0.32
1968	0.14	55.79	0.52	0.32
1969	0.15	53.33	0.5	0.49
1970	0.14	67.42	0.43	0.26
1971	0.15	75.67	0.48	0.27
1972	0.15	63.63	0.44	0.31
1973	0.15	59.47	0.44	0.32
1974	0.15	49.71	0.4	0.33
1975	0.14	45.54	0.95	0.33
1976	0.17	61.37	0.51	0.31
1977	0.14	63.81	0.4	—
1978	0.15	68.62	0.53	—
1979	0.15	63.87	0.32	—

Source 1 Indian Labour Statistics-1975

2 Indian Year Books-1951 to 1980

3 National Commission on Labour, page 109

Table 2
Reported Cases of Occupational Diseases 1960-1980

Year	No of cases reported	
	Under Factories Act, 1948*	Under Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923*
1960	38	—
1961	106	—
1962	76	—
1963	30	—
1964	17	—
1965	5	—
1966	50	115
1967	37	125
1968	22	89
1969	38	91
1970	42	73
1971	3	24
1972	17	34
1973	14	33
1974	19	96
1975	27	91
1976	12	107
1977	23	102
1978	19	88
1979	12	91
1980	32	NA

Source National Labour Year Books

Table 3a
Index of Industrial Production
Base Year 1960=100

Industry	Weight	1951	1955	1965	1971
Mining	9.72	66.6	74.6	131.7	153.4
Manufacturing	84.91	54.6	73.8	153.8	178.9
Food Processing	12.09	66.9	75.9	122.2	157.6
Textile	27.06	79.7	94.1	114.8	106
Chemical	7.26	42.4	60.1	153.9	252.7
Petroleum & Coal	1.36	11	56.1	158.7	316.9
Basic Metals	7.38	46.5	17.66	180.1	208.6
Machinery	3.38	22.2	35.5	316	373.2
Transport Equipment	7.7	19.6	99.2	206.3	122.1

Source Reserve Bank of India, Report on Currency & Finance (annual)

Table 3b
Index of Industrial Production
(Base 1970=100)

Industry	Weight	1971-72	1975-76	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Mining & Quarrying	9.69	101.9	132.3	151.9	175.8	195.8	217.3
Food Manufacturing Industries except							
Beverage Industries	10.64	97.4	107.5	134.1	150.5	171.7	162.7
Beverage Industries	0.69	123.9	173.6	329.2	482	555.5	532.5
Tobacco Industries	2.21	107	96.6	127.2	144.2	150	139.5
Textile	17.43	102.2	105.7	155.7	113	104.8	111.7
Chemical	10.9	116.5	137.7	188.2	212.8	217.9	231.5
Petroleum & Coal	1.62	108.6	122.5	140.5	164.2	181	191.5
Basic Metals	8.84	105.5	120.9	137.5	148.1	161.4	160.8
Machinery (except Electrical)	5.55	117.1	159.7	221.8	239	238.7	258.9
Non Metallic Minerals	3.33	111.3	123.2	161.4	169.9	179.6	189.8
Metal Products	2.77	108.1	125.8	147.7	149.5	161.4	169
Electrical Mach	5.3	107	121.8	176	182.1	174	183.2

Source: Economic Survey of India

Table 4
Growth of Industries and Associated Health Hazards

Period	Industries introduced during the period	Hazards associated with these industries
upto 1893	Cotton, Textiles, Railways, Jute Mills, Coal mines	Dust, noise, heat, high-speed machinery, roof falls, physical injuries
1893-1929	Plantations, Tobacco & Bidi, Shellac, Carpets, Wool, Mica and Manganese Mines, Match, Tanneries, Paper, Machinery	Dust, heat, heavy machinery, weather conditions, toxic chemical poisoning, noxious gases, pollution, physical injuries
1929-1943	Pottery, Cement, Sugar, Chemicals, Dyes, Beverages, Shipbuilding, Power Generation	All the above plus electrical hazards
1943-1950	Rayon, Fertilizers, Aluminium, Automobiles, Locomotives, Aircraft, Pumps, Motors, Engines	Toxic chemicals and gases, problems of very high speed machinery, heat, noise, biological agents
After 1950	Food Products, Plastics, Metals, Alloys, Nonmetallic Minerals, Synthetics, Electronics, Chemicals, Nuclear Energy	Genetic effects, high toxicity of chemicals, non-biodegradable material, noxious gases, radiation, pesticides

Table 5
Workers Classified by Broad Industrial Categories
on the Basis of Census Data, 1951-81 (in millions)

Year of census		1951	1961	1971	1981
1	Cultivators	69.7	99.5	78.1	92.5
2	Agricultural Labour	27.5	31.4	47.4	55.4
	Total Agricultural Labour	97.2	130.9	125.5	147.9
3	Mining, Quarrying, Fishing, Forestry Hunting, Plantations etc	4.1	5.1	5.2	
4	Household industry		12	63	77
5	Other than Household	12.5	7.9	10.7	
6	Total Manufacturing	12.5	19.9	17	
7	Construction	1.4	2	2.2	
8	Trade & Commerce	7.3	7.6	10	
9	Transport & Storage & Commission	2.1	3	4.4	
10	Other Services	14.6	19.5	15.7	
11	Marginal Workers (working less than 183 days per year)				22
12	Total Non-agricultural Labour	42	57.1	54.5	74.4

Table 6
Frequency Rates of Total Industrial Injuries* in Some Important Industries
(Injuries per lakh man days worked)

	1956	1961	1966	1968	1970	1973	1976
Process (Agriculture)	1.23	0.64	1.34	1.58	1.35	6.78	0
Food (non-Beverage)	5.35	5.62	4.82	3.91	4.43	4.92	3.38
Beverage, Tobacco & Tobacco Products	8.05	6.89	10.46	13.33	17.89	6.12	10.24
Textile	14.75	13.24	24.15	28.29	43.03	101.3	116.56
Textile Products	5.2	4.78	4.67	4.27	4.32	3.8	3.05
Wood & Wood Products	9.82	19.11	19.75	16.74	9.31	11.18	7.32
Paper Printing and Publishing	19.8	23.55	22.41	30.04	31.3	13.46	11.28
Leather and Leather Products	2.57	5.48	8.98	9.74	12.81	16.47	0.1527
Rubber, Plastic, Petroleum, Coal					25.91	10.64	9.54
Chemical & Chemical Products (except Petrochemicals & Coal)	13.19	16.16	11.64	12.75	12.6	11.33	11.91
Non-Metallic Mine Products	9.72	10.81	12.68	11.21	13.97	13.7	11.22
Basic Metals, Alloys	21.94	29.77	24.42	23.03	24.05	24.05	20.1
Metal Products (except Transport Machinery)	20.77	21.7	15.35	17.09	19	17.64	15.82
Machinery & Tools	22.5	23.01	21.98	25.93	27.18	16.54	19.35
Electrical Machinery	12.93	13.66	15.34	15.14	17.6	14.18	14.6
Transport Equipment	48.84	26.65	30.61	29.39	26.58	25.7	23.79
Gas & Steam	18.85	17.65	14.73	14.28	9.14	31.18	26.44
Others	14.83	11.83	10.08	10.15	10.56	9.46	17.53

Source: National Labour Year books

* Fatal injuries, Non fatal injuries and Total injuries

Table 7
Trends in Factory Inspection

	<i>No of factories on register</i>	<i>No of factories inspected</i>	<i>Factories inspected as a percentage of Factories on register</i>
1950	32465	27016	83.2
1961	38478	283430	73.65
1971	88089	63018	71.54
1980	141028	85336	60.51

Source: National Labour Year Books

Table 8
Percentage of Contract Labour in Selected Industries

<i>S No</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>% of Contract Labour to Total Industrial Labour</i>	<i>Reference Year</i>
1	Port & Doct	38.6	1957
2	Construction (PWS only)	60.0	1957
3	Metal Extracting	25.2	1959
4	Metal rolling	27.0	1959
5	Limestone quarries	36.7	1962-63
6	Iron Ore	73.9	1956
7	Manganese	65.8	1960-61
8	Rice mills	21.7	1963
9	Salt	49.1	1963
10	Jute pressing	73.8	1963
11	Tarpaulin	63.7	1963
12	Agri-Implements	34.3	1963
13	Breweries & Malt	28.6	1963

Table 9
Percentage Distribution of Households in Household Occupation Groups
by Major Castes All-India Urban Sample Households

<i>Household Occupation</i>	<i>Caste</i>				
	<i>Upper</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Scheduled</i>	<i>All Castes</i>
1 Farmer	7.89	12.69	19.42	10.84	14.01
2 Mining	—	0.22	—	0.24	0.1
3 Manufacturer of Food Products	0.75	1.74	2.67	2.17	1.99
4 Manufacture of Textiles	8.19	6.94	8.28	8.92	7.01
5 Other Manufacturers	1.31	3.15	3.12	5.3	8.09
6 Construction and Sanitary Services	1.69	4.01	4.99	15.9	5.65
7 Trade and Commerce	10.32	18.44	12.64	6.26	13.22
8 Transport & Communication Services	7.69	8.24	10.77	14.22	9.9
9 Administrative & Professional Services	57.97	37.52	28.85	26.99	36.46
10 Others	9.19	7.05	9.26	9.16	8.57
11 All Non-Agricultural Occupations	92.11	87.31	80.58	89.16	85.99
12 All Occupations	100	100	100	100	100

Source: NSS, 1958-59

Table 10
Coverage of Factories by the Inspectorate
(Average Number of Factories per Inspector)

States	1946	1954	1956	1962
Bengal	224	176	272	208
Bihar	143	330	291	677
Bombay*	354	171 (Maharashtra)	214	195
U P	135	76	132	180
Madras	214	419	380	170
Andhra	NA	NA	397	319
Central Provinces and Berar*	164	133 (M P)	211	262

Source National Commission on Labour, 1969, p 96

* After 1954 the figures are for Maharashtra & M P

Table 11
Trends and Causes of Convictions Obtained During 1950-1980
for Offences Under the Factories Act 1948

Year	Convicted for lack of safety provisions		Convicted for lack of Health and Sanitation		Total Convictions (Including all other cases)		Total Registered Factories	Factories convicted for Health, Sanitation and safety violation as a percentage of	
	No	(1) % of (3)	No	(2) % of (3)	No	(3) % of (f)	(4) No	(a) TFC	(b) FR
1951	127	23.82	136	25.51	533	19.43	2743	49.33	8.6
1952	365	11.59	368	11.68	3148	9.69	32465	33.27	2.2
1954	275	6.39	432	10.21	4231	12.52	33772	16.6	2.1
1956	380	6.06	882	14.07	6265	NA	NA	20.1	7.4
1961	638	12.66	335	6.65	5037	7.89	38478	19.31	2.5
1965	698	13.97	335	6.7	4993	7.23	69004	20.67	1.4
1970	1135	11.86	803	8.39	9567	11.33	84426	20.25	2.2
1974	1463	14.7	882	8.86	9946	9.5	104680	23.56	2.2
1979	2016	14.01	1527	10.66	14320	11.64	122931	24.67	2.86
1980	2339	15.72	1040	7.02	14814	10.5	141028	22.74	2.36

TFC Total Factories Convicted, FR Factories Registered

Source National Labour Year Books

Percentage columns have been worked out with the assumption that one factory is convicted only once. If the assumption is incorrect the percentage will only decrease.

Table 12
Number of Compensated Accidents under Workmen's Compensation Act — 1923

Year	Death	Permanent Disability	Temporary Disability	Total Disability	Compensated Accidents per Conviction
1951	1087	4391	57655	63133	497.1
1952	1040	4308	53386	58734	160.9
1954	1165	4543	60410	66118	240.4
1956	937	3406	57267	61610	162.1
1961	1238	4817	87603	93783	146.9
1965	1574	6170	156643	164387	235.5
1970	1080	3887	60550	65517	57.7
1974	999	3272	31933	32204	57.7
1975	1016	2675	27744	31455	—
1980	1004	3293	89006	93303	39.8

Source Indian Labour Year Book

The number of convictions of registered factories for lack of safety provisions are taken from Table-11

Table 13
ESI Institutions for Medical Care

<i>Institutions</i>	<i>1956</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1968</i>	<i>1981</i>
Hospitals	—	—	24	70
Annexes	—	—	18	34
Beds	878	2488	8123	20505
Dispensaries	98	334	641	1072
Insured persons	1292	1939	5923	7161800

Source ESI Annual Report & National Commission on Labour, 1969, p 179

Table 14
Incidence of Morbidity in Persons Insured under ESI
(New Case/100 Insured Persons)

	<i>1961-62</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1979-80</i>
Common	295.02	293.6	269
Bronchitis	274.86	249.3	219
Dysentery and Cholera etc	202.93	242.8	215
Accidents/Violence/Poisoning	212.12	190.8	188
Skin Infections	166.5	162.8	182
Diarrhoea	156.4	195.1	169.5
Digestive Diseases	186.3	153.5	138.9
Arthritis and Rheumatism	195.6	177.4	128.3
Stomach & Ddodenum	145	132.4	126
Influenza	232.8	189.2	120
Avitaminosis and other Deficiencies	88.3	137.3	113
Other Skin Diseases	67.5	75.8	100
Allergies	55.2	87	95.9
Diseases of the Eye	88.6	109.4	88.5
Anaemia	55.6	102.4	84.8
Pharyngitis	90.2	98	74
Ear Diseases	39.4	45.9	54
Helminths & Parasites	56.7	41.4	51.9
Obstetric Problems	47.1	49.5	27.4
Genital Diseases	18.67	21.2	35.3
Respiratory Tuberculosis	10.1	14.7	15.5
Eruptive Fevers	9.11	13.4	11.8
Respiratory Diseases—other than Pneumonia	34.7	54.5	—
Pneumonia	5.5	7.3	—

Source Indian Labour Year Books

Table 15
Cause of Industrial Disputes

Year	Wages		Bonus		Retrenchment *		Leave & Hrs		Others		Not Known		Indiscipline and Violence	
	a	b	a	b	a	b	z	b	a	b	a	b	a	b
1951	301	(28 1)	70	(6 5)	301	(28 1)	84	(7 9)	270	(25 2)	45	(4 5)	-	-
1961	-	(30 4)	-	(6 9)		(29 3)	-	(3 0)		(30 4)	-	-	-	-
1962	-	(30 2)	-	(12 3)		(25 2)	-	(0 7)		(31 6)	-	-	-	-
1971	935	(34 3)	384	(14 1)	476	(17 5)	39	(1 4)	643	(23 6)	29		97	(3 6)
1979	927	(30 4)	255	(8 3)	633	(12 7)	69	(2 3)	758	(24 9)	142	(4 7)	264	(8 7)
1980	767	(26 9)	196	(6 9)	559	(19 6)	60	(2 1)	778	(27 2)	158	(5 5)	240	(8 4)
1982	740	(29 9)	140	(5 6)	475	(19 2)	36	(1 4)	656	(26 5)	71	(2 9)	292	(9 4)

* This includes other personnel problems as well

a = No of disputes

b = percentage of total disputes

Source Indian Labour Year Book, 1983

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On Sociology in/of India: Toward a Discursive Deviation

'Audacity, audacity, still more audacity!'

—Lenin

Theoretical work, it will be acknowledged, proceeds by constant problematisations and reconstructions. As part of such an exercise, this essay may indicate possibilities which are not wholly borne out by the analysis. Our task is not to present a survey of research in sociology and social anthropology, or to evaluate the contributions of individual sociologists. Instead, we hope to address some issues, primarily of a discursive kind, that bear on the sociological enterprise in India. We ask: can the issue be merely posed in terms that suggest that Indian sociology is 'imitative',¹ that it has not broken from 'colonial and semi-feudal perspectives' and that it has not evolved a 'language' of its own?² Or, alternatively, that it has not been 'wholly imitative',³ that it has been responsive to nationalistic and social concerns?⁴ And, that Indian sociology remains grounded on a 'deductive-positivistic' base and is therefore delimited in its comprehension of social reality,⁵ that sociologists have neglected 'the concept of the desired type of society' in their studies,⁶ that basically 'non-Marxist' approaches have dominated Indian sociology while the Marxist paradigm is the most relevant framework for the study of Indian society,⁷ that sociologists must address themselves to issues of social policy,⁸ that social epistemology has failed to encounter social reality,⁹ and so on? Or, can the issue be posed as Saberwal has done: 'How does an intellectual tradition, arising out of a civilisation with particular kinds of intellectual and social habits and resources become domesticated in another civilisation whose intellectual habits and resources have been very different?'¹⁰

In this essay, we will focus on the frame, what will be called the discursive core, that sustains the practice of sociology in India. Our way of handling the issues involved here is not by giving a comprehensive account of the development of Indian sociology nor by

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documenting its substantive and methodological foci; in fact, the analysis is deliberately incomplete and 'open'. We will concentrate on what may be considered a purely descriptive excursus, concerned with accounting for the 'how' rather than the 'why' in the ongoing discourse/practice of Indian sociology. Indeed, the concerns of this essay approximate to a sociology of knowledge, but it seeks to go beyond simple assertions about the existential determination of knowledge. The thrust will be to provide a glimpse of the logic, both epistemic and 'practical', pervading the discipline of sociology in India. The various analyses and assessments of Indian sociology, or, more accurately, the sociology in and of India, have formed the basis of our reading. Rather than viewing these accounts as reflecting the opinions of their authors, we take them as embodying the dispositions, strategies and ways of perceiving reality that are taken for granted within the discipline. Also, inhering in the very mode of our presentation and reference are the terms of a possible discursive deviation, which, however, has not been taken up for detailed explication. One last reminder since the issues and positions we examine here are fairly subtle, it is necessary to have the relevant passages before us. The frequent quotations, therefore, are not an appeal to authority but the necessary result when 'texts' are all we have here and now.

I

The discursive core sustaining the practice of sociology in India will not be viewed as a system of abstract categories, but simply as a set of dispositions and strategies within the discipline. It seems to combine (a) an emphasis on the substantiality of the social world and, consequently, of the objects of sociological analysis, with (b) a realism asserting interpretative frames that reveal the 'truth' of the social reality, and (c) an ideationalism which incorporates an understanding of social facts/domains in terms of indigenous ideologies. Although we will represent them separately, in ways that may even seem to run counter to each other, these strategies constitute the intellectual and practical base of the sociological enterprise in India. In other words, the discursive core, by constituting objects of sociological inquiry and suggesting ways of approaching them, represents the conditions of possibility of Indian sociology.¹¹

(a) It would not be an exaggeration to assert that the discourse of Indian sociology has been a discourse of 'substantiality', the tendency being to conceive of the social world as existing 'out there'—as an objective material structure of relations—awaiting, so to say, sociological scrutiny. Associated with this is an emphasis on contextualisation—the situating of particular manifestations of social phenomena within a 'larger' social field. In a general sense, the functionalist and behaviourist underpinnings of most sociological studies in India embody this discourse of substantiality. We would even assert that the ways of theorising characteristic of a Marxist

disposition also exemplify this preoccupation with 'substantiality', as evidenced from such concepts as class, mode of production, the forces and directionality of change identified, and so on¹²

Particularly, this 'substantial' disposition finds expression not only in the assertions for supplanting (*sic*) the 'book view' of Indian society with the 'field view', but also in the refusal to include indological materials within Indian sociology, often on grounds that suggest a dichotomy between text and context, prescription and description,¹³ the denunciation of Dumont's proposal for a sociology of India¹⁴ as 'culturology', as 'narrow' and even parochial,¹⁵ the insistence on shifting from 'cultural' to 'structural' issues,¹⁶ and so on. Saberwal's espousal of a 'world historical view' is a more sophisticated instance of this disposition. 'It would seek to analyse observational fields by way not merely of their internal, synchronic inter-relatedness but also of the long term clash and confluence of ideas, institutional forms and patterns of conduct arising in different traditions—seem to be located in their historical time'¹⁷

In the context of his analysis, the historical process comes to be defined in substantive terms—the occurrence of events in time and space—and even (implicitly?) suggests a view of history as accumulated past effects, in this instance, the inability of Indian society to develop 'unified, impersonal codes' that could sustain the institutions of a 'megasociety'¹⁸

Obviously, the foregoing emphases, though yielding a body of knowledge about Indian society, have gone hand in hand with a positivist approach. This, as Das has noted, 'has been accompanied by a refusal to discuss the epistemological issues about the bases of knowledge and the nature of truth'. True knowledge is seen as imitative/reflective of the external world, as flowing from the experiential encounter between 'reality' and 'conceptions' about it. That is, the external world is seen to have a concreteness regardless of the efforts of human consciousness to constitute it. However, what has been ignored is that such an 'objective reality' with which the anthropologist engages in the field is itself a pre-constructed world, organising and directing the perception of 'relevant' facts.¹⁹

Nevertheless, we would also be inclined to think that the stress on the substantiality of social phenomena was not meant to constrict sociological analysis to observational fields or to 'facts' encountered therein, it, in fact, subsumed frameworks for interpreting the data gathered, in other words, the theory-laden observation of facts. Srinivas argued that 'micro-studies provide insights while macro-studies yield perspectives' and that 'movement from one to the other is essential'.²⁰ He went on to constitute the focus on social change in modern India as a core issue of the discipline. Indeed, as part of the attempt to promote a deeper understanding of the microcosm studied (be it the village, caste, family, or even Indian society as a whole), the organising framework of 'social change' has constituted a decisive

intellectual matrix within Indian sociology. It is in this context that we have such concepts as 'sanskritisation-westernisation', 'universalisation-parochialisation', 'the little and the great traditions', 'continuity and change' and the various allusions to the tradition/modernity schema.²¹ The decisive character of this intellectual matrix, we would think, consists in its discursive status as an ideological counter to a focus on social reproduction/social domination in Indian 'society'.²² And this is (in) spite of what Marxists may have to say about 'feudalism', 'capitalism' and/or the sharpening of 'contradictions' in Indian society. It must be pointed out that the trend in the nature of sociological studies, noted by Singh,²³ from studies of social structure to those of social processes in the 1970s and the 1980s does not constitute a rejection of the 'social change' paradigm, rather, the shift, if there has been any, seems to further entrench it.²⁴

(b) Closely associated with the foregoing emphases has been a realism, consisting in a concern with revealing comprehensively the social space in which we exist. This finds sustained articulation in Ramakrishna Mukherjee and is worth considering at some length, for it is emblematic of positions dominant within the discipline. According to him, 'the precise, comprehensive, and unequivocal appraisal of the social reality' entails an answer to five 'fundamental' questions, namely, 'what is it?', 'how is it?', 'why is it?', 'what will it be?' and 'what should it be?'²⁵ Asserting that sociology is not only concerned with the 'observable' and 'deducible' actions, behaviour, relationships and institutions, Mukherjee recommends that Indian sociology 'cut through the imposed theoretical and methodological constraints of a deductive-positivistic nature and raise the body of knowledge to a higher level of analysis which thus enhances the comprehension of social reality'.²⁶ Thus, for him, means the adoption of an 'inductive-inferential' approach.

In reference to each image (or theory) and exhaustive empirical explorations, a social scientist will have to answer concurrently, 'what is it?' and 'what is it not?', 'how is it?' and 'how is it not?', 'why is it?' and 'why is it not?'. Thus, a constant interplay of the positive and negative aspects of the available knowledge, and a dialectical interaction among them, will produce a precise, unequivocal and evermore comprehensive appreciation of social reality.²⁷

The approach would also entail answering, on a probability and evaluative basis respectively, the questions 'what will it be?' and 'what should it be?'. In essence, what is being articulated in Mukherjee is a sociology of India 'develop(ing) on (an) inductive and inferential base, and in the course of testing the relative efficiency of different valuations of social reality'.²⁸

Considered in these terms, the realism underlying approaches to/of Indian sociology complements the stress on the substantiality of the

social world seen earlier. The central concern is with cataloguing the social environment and thereby revealing the 'truth' of contemporary life in society²⁹ The virtues pursued seem to be accuracy and completeness of description Empirical and/or theoretical formulations are judged on the basis of their capacity to grasp the complex and fluid structure of reality The practice of social science becomes an encounter between 'reality' and various constructions of it, the former refuting, modifying or validating the latter Thus, sociological practice comes to reflect positivism's search for ever greater accuracy and inclusiveness resting on the exaltation of the scientific method³⁰ We may add that the separation between 'knowledge' and 'reality' underlying the positivist exaltation of method is problematic, as already indicated above. Particularly, it does not permit any possibility of 'communication' between the discursive and non-discursive domains of social life 'how and in what form (the non-discursive) takes part in (the) conditions of emergence, insertion and functioning' of discourse, and how discourse 'is articulated on practices that are external to it, and which are not themselves of a discursive order'³¹

(c) Apparently running counter to the emphasis on the substantiality of the social world is the ideationalism of certain approaches to/of Indian sociology This implies the study of social phenomena 'from the point of view of the cultural meanings associated with their institutionalised manifestations'³² The reference (inspiration?) is clearly Louis Dumont, whose reflections on the nature of anthropological explanation has been acclaimed as a 'landmark' in Indian sociology³³ Stressing the importance of a sociology of values, of explaining social facts through indigenous ideologies, Dumont (and Pocock) asserted

For us, social facts are not only things but things and representations at the same time This means that we cannot abstract directly from behaviour nor evade the ideas of the people that we study For we look at our data from without (as a natural scientist does) and from within (a position having no equivalent in the natural sciences)³⁴

In doing so, Dumont is able to transcend the thought/behaviour dichotomy,³⁵ and address himself to an analysis of the identity (defined in 'structural' terms) of a phenomenon that may lie behind concrete manifestations³⁶ For him, it must be reiterated, the identity of a phenomenon, though socially constituted in terms of the categories of thought used by the people studied, is fundamentally objective and 'real' in that the categories derive from social experience The social, for Dumont (as for Durkheim and Mauss before him—the sociological tradition to which Dumont subscribes), describes a reality that is prior to individuals, and it is this reality that creates the attributes and capacities of the people studied³⁷

The ideationalist strategy also incorporates a focus on how people organise their material world, what has been designated as 'ethno-

sociology' In particular, the concern is with delineating the principles of classification used by the people themselves³⁸ and with 'relating cultural categories and social behaviour to ideas about the person in Indian society . . . show(ing) how a people's cosmological ideas and social theories are linked to their notions of the person, the self and the individual'.³⁹ It can be seen that whenever these accounts do not amount to an 'objectivist' celebration of society (the individual/person as constructed by society), they often seem to embody the terms of a 'subjectivist' summary (the individual/person as constructing society),⁴⁰ but each implying a set of (usually tacit) anthropological theses—the former constructing the objective relations structuring social practices and the latter privileging the primary experience of the social world

Thus, perhaps in an extreme sense, the ideationalist strategy as routed through Dumont's structural method and/or the ethno-sociological focus as also the substantialist disposition discussed earlier, replicates one of the fundamental oppositions (within general—'western'—sociology) between, what Bourdieu has termed, 'objectivism' and 'subjectivism'.

From the objectivist point of view, social agents can be 'treated as things', as in the old Durkheimian precept, that is, classified like objects access to the objective classifications presupposes here a break with naive subjective classifications, which are seen as 'pre-notions' or 'ideologies' From the subjectivist point of view, . . . agents construct social reality, which is itself understood as the product of the aggregation of these individual acts of construction For this sort of social marginalism, there is no need to break with primary social experience, for the task of sociology is to give 'an account of accounts' ⁴¹

In essence, we would think that this opposition is endemic to the discursive core of Indian sociology ⁴² Within the terms suggested by our discussion, the underlying logic of the discursive core seems to be to stress the wholly determined character of man and society and to imply a mechanistic conception of 'knowledge' and 'reality' (that the former expresses/imitates the latter) ⁴³ The epistemological standpoint, that 'in reality, agents are both classified and classifiers, but they classify according to (or depending upon) their position within classifications',⁴⁴ clearly eludes the discursive core Now, this has tremendous implications for the ways in which we come to reflect on and/or practise a sociology in/of India Underlying this position is a form of theoretical knowledge that Bourdieu terms 'praxeological', that which is concerned 'not only with the objective relations constructed by the objectivist form of knowledge, but also with the dialectical relationships between the objective structures and the structured dispositions which they produce and which tend to reproduce them, i.e., the dual process of the internalisation of

externality and the externalisation of internality'⁴⁵ The anthropological thesis underlying this standpoint is clearly 'homo structuralis', a suggestion that we take from de Silva,⁴⁶ and not as Dumont would affirm 'homo hierarchicus' (the 'Indian' concept of man Dumont constructs as a foil to 'homo aequalis', the 'western' man),⁴⁷ or even Alvares' model of 'homo faber'⁴⁸ In effect, 'homo structuralis' marks a thesis which requires working out in and through both the 'field' and the texts that (have) come to be constructed around it, a task which I hope to accomplish in time But for the immediate task on hand, and in keeping with the perspective indicated, I am suggesting a pronouncedly anthropological basis for our theoretical inquiries, one that is not intended to uncover continuities and/or changes, not to isolate mechanisms of causality, but to define the specific forms of articulation within a (non)discursive field, *pace* Foucault and Bourdieu⁴⁹

Consequently then, we may point out, by way of concluding this section, that the discursive core of Indian sociology, although emphasising 'text' (the 'book view' of Indian society) or 'context' (the 'field view'), or both (Dumont's confluence of indology and sociology, or even the so-called 'world historical view' of Saberwal), has however failed to investigate the specific set of anthropological theses underpinning its positions and to explore the conditions of possibility of both 'text' and 'context'—problems that, hopefully, the foregoing account and the description to follow have made apparent

II

The foregoing discussion leads on directly to the question, much discussed by scholars in India, of the identity of sociology in/of India We have to delve deeper into the configurations suggested by the discursive core. Two elements seem to be particularly influential

One of them the overriding urge, within the discursive core, to homogenise the ontological domain of India, to illuminate the general through the study of the particular, or to translate the latter into categories capable of refining the former. This urge finds classic formulation in Dumont

In sociological studies the universal can only be attained through the particular characteristics, different in each case, of each type of society. Why should we travel to India if not to try to discover how and in what respects Indian society or civilisation, by its very particularity, represents a form of the universal? In the last analysis, it is by humbly inspecting the most minute particulars that the route to the universal is kept open If one is prepared to 'devote all the time necessary to studying all aspects of Indian culture, one has a chance, under certain conditions, of in the end transcending it, and of one day finding in it some truth for one's own use'⁵⁰

What Dumont is articulating here is the time-honoured 'anthropological ambition' to deal with a wide range of human societies in a single, comprehensive frame of reference.⁵¹ It is important to come to terms with this comparative project, for in essence, the sociology in/of India seems to bear the brunt of such a disciplinary/cultural scaffolding.

Following Said,⁵² it can be argued that the entire project of a comparative sociology constitutes a means of representing the power of the 'west' over/to the 'non-western' world. As Said claims, 'no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances'⁵³ In effect, the task of 'constituting cultural domains in and through the dialectical encounter of universal and particular'⁵⁴ becomes a project of power—the 'universal' (read 'west') coming to define the orientation of and to, even constraining the possibilities in and of, the particular (read 'non-west'/India). Indeed the 'comparative, relational linking' of universal and particular cannot be unmediated by standards of interpretation derived from an 'alien' culture—the construction of an 'other' for 'self' constitution and rule. We may note, in this context, the 'ideology of internationalism' that underlies comparative studies. This ideology concretises the internationalist aspirations of the European man which received their supreme formulation in the Enlightenment.⁵⁵

Take, for instance, the recent discussions of the 'person' held to serve as a useful way of introducing 'new' considerations for a sociology of India.⁵⁶ The protagonists of this approach display a concern with formulating what they call 'an epistemology for anthropology' which would eschew the 'use (of) other cultures merely as a kind of foil for extending the domain of the rationalising process'. They reaffirm that 'we can understand something of ourselves in terms of other cultures, and we can understand something of others in terms of ourselves'.⁵⁷

If, as the protagonists themselves seem to imply, the other cannot be understood as the other and the ourselves as the ourselves, the practice of a comparative science becomes necessarily an 'alien' act of interpretation—an act not of approximating to the meaning *in* a culture but of founding a meaning *for* a culture. In the specific context of societies like India (indeed, the entire non-western world), where the contact with the west has necessarily meant conquest, colonialism, modernity—relationships pregnant with implications for the overthrow of the 'traditional' order—the comparative project inevitably becomes a project of 'extending the domain of the rationalising process'. To the extent that comparison and conceptual (re-)formulation cannot come to terms with the fundamental irreducibility of cultures and their diversities, even their incommensurability, the practice of a comparative science, whatever its rhetorical appeal, becomes a discourse of power in the sense given above. The homogenising urge within Indian sociology participates in

this project of power and, consequently, remains an undertaking caught in the thralldom of a schizophrenic existence combining calls to indigenisation with dreams of a 'universal' science of society

Nothing illustrates this better than the quest for relevance with Indian sociology as also the debate for a sociology of India.⁵⁸ The sociology in/of India is no more than a reflex of general (western) sociology.⁵⁹ It would not be an exaggeration to assert that scholars of the post-colonial world live their conditions of existence through the forms of dominant intellectual discourse in the west, this can often mean that they live their revolt within the frames of reference of the dominant legitimacy, the west. Also, the process of indigenisation⁶⁰ as well as the protestations about 'academic colonialism'⁶¹ seem to concretise the striving within the social sciences to become hegemonic disciplines. Perhaps a systematic reflection on the principles governing the production and immanent ordering of discourses within the social sciences will bear this out.

The other particularly influential element is the overwhelming pragmatism that encapsulates the discipline in India.⁶² The reference here is not simply to the imbrication of (generally) social science research with the state or to the technology of social engineering and control of scholarship suggested by this overlap,⁶³ it is also to the pragmatism as a perfectly modern cosmogony that places 'science' and efficacy for the purpose in hand—that truth is what 'works' (which of course does not mean that 'anything goes')—at the pivot of methodological strategy.⁶⁴ Indeed, the relativist implications of such a pragmatist disposition seems to fold into an instrumentalist view of political ideology,⁶⁵ and, consequently, unable to disclose the subtle workings of power (even state power) underwriting human practices. In other words, pragmatism implies a specific configuration linking the practice of sociology (more generally, the social sciences) to the constitution of political power. Take, for instance, the thematisation of the question of social change within Indian sociology, briefly considered in the first part of this paper. Clearly the scholars involved were not simply describing an independently occurring series of changes. Indeed we could argue that they helped constitute the forms of state power that emerged from those changes. While a precise handling of this linkage must await a detailed consideration of the materials generated within Indian sociology and the trajectory of India's political development, it is possible to clarify some of the levels at which the pragmatism manifests itself.

The first and most fundamental level is the body of knowledge that has been generated about the various aspects of Indian society and culture.⁶⁶ If this body of work cannot be conceived outside the framework disclosed by the discursive core, then, the latter can be viewed as a permanent, seemingly central, matrix of sociological enquiry, and serving as the source of epistemic authority. In particular, the discursive core seems to provide the framework of a pragmatic

epistemology, apparently adjudicating between contending claims to truth, and yet hegemonic in its exaltation of science, of method and of the professional ideal.

Mapping this epistemology, we can broadly locate it in the context of the various specialisations in Indian sociology. Discussions generally tend to underestimate the significance of this development. While a preoccupation with, say, the institutional and ideological complex of caste and village may have meant a focus on what was most distinctive about Indian society (indeed, to the colonising eye), clearly, the development of the discipline seems to have proceeded along lines that suggest both its diversification and specialisation. This development, it seems to us, is particularly significant since it has kept pace with, and paced by, the growth and development of the profession of sociologists in India.⁶⁷ Indeed, it would be interesting to study the process, suggesting thereby the constitution of the knowledge base of a professional group in the context of the opportunities thrown up by the welfare state.

Another related level at which the pragmatism of Indian sociology comes through is the authority that continues to be lent to sociology itself—as a practical aid to social policy. Not only is the sociologist called upon to assist in the task of 'nation-building' and the promotion of a 'scientific ethos', but the patterns of practice endorsed imply a clear connection between sociological research and policy-making. Research is not just seen as a means of giving effect to already formulated objectives, it must also shape the ends of policy making. Likewise, calls for 'interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration' and for 'recollect(ing) the umpteen human or social disciplines into a human science' have been made—the effort being directed toward re-establishing the policy credentials of the social sciences and fostering the instances of our contemporary modernity.⁶⁸

III

Perhaps we are now in a position to see the issues that bear on the sociological enterprise in India in an entirely new light. We have stressed the discursive core that sustains the practice of sociology in India and noted its urge to homogenise and pragmatise the ontological domain of India. In particular, we would stress the schizophrenia to which Indian sociology seems to be condemned, an identity that alternates between mild protestations about 'swaraj' and indigenisation and the grand ambitions of participating in the discourse of the universal and the particular.

It is obvious that the discursive core valorises the sociology in/of India by placing it beyond the reach of ideological/cultural critique. There is hardly any attempt at posing the central issue of the ontological status of sociology, in particular, to formulate 'sociology' as a problem in the history of ideas.⁶⁹ Any serious attempt at engaging

with the possibility of doing a sociology in/of India must necessarily come to terms with this issue.

Sociology, far from being a generalising, comparative science of society, has been bound up with the 'project of modernity' conceived by the west and projected as the process for all mankind.⁷⁰ As bound up with the 'project of modernity', sociology remains, necessarily, an 'alien' undertaking in India, irrespective of what scholars may have to say about its distinctive or imitative character.⁷¹ The practice of sociology in India (or in any non-western context) is bound to be dialogical in the sense that within it the ideological imperatives of at least two consciousnesses—the western and the Indian—intersect. It is primarily the contours of this intersection that are problematic, as our description of Indian sociology as schizophrenic has sought to reveal. Obviously, and in a fundamental sense, the schizophrenia (re)inscribes the dominance of the west.

Our suggestion that the ontological status of sociology must be posed as a core issue, as also the imperative to study the entire western tradition, may thus seem contradictory, even counter-productive. But this seems to be the only way of situating ourselves in relation to questions of sociology.⁷² Far from Indian society being the object of study, we would define a focus for a sociology in/of India that would attempt to 'narrativise' (as distinct from mere historical study)⁷³ the development of sociological thought in India, and, to the extent that this has been 'co-temporaneous with her contact with the west which . . . also meant conquest',⁷⁴ to offer a parallel narrative about the west.

The discursive deviation envisaged here eschews a search for a 'method' which will be superior to others in objectivity and comprehensiveness. Rather, the attempt will be to forge cultural frames which germinate in the political-intellectual conflicts of the present, that is, the contemporary manifestations of our modernity and its interfaces, its discontents,⁷⁵ as well as, and this is perhaps more important, transcending the 'civilisational' problematic of, say, Dumont for the 'praxeological' framework *à la* Bourdieu/Foucault. In keeping with this focus, we would define as a basic problem for a sociology in/of India the means by which systems of domination and/or subjectification persist and reproduce themselves within India's diverse social terrain.⁷⁶ Surely there is more to understanding societies than specifying the mechanisms, manifestations and implications of change or merely studying social movements!

Paradoxically, we have been talking of a problematic for a sociology in/of India that can proceed only by engaging with (negating?) the conditions of its possibility (that is, the discursive core and the configurations suggested therein). It is by seeking to become 'de-disciplinary', rather than by being 'inter-disciplinary' that we can hope to inaugurate discourses which hold out the promise of bridging theory and practice, text and context. But how would the archetypes of

the sociological establishment—those soaked in the logic of the discursive core—react to such discursive deviations?⁷⁷

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 See T N Madan, 'For a Sociology of India', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 9, 1966, pp 9–16 Also, S C Dube, 'Indian Sociology at the Turning Point', *Sociological Bulletin*, 26(1) 1977, pp 1–3
- 2 See P C Joshi, 'Reflections on Social Science Research in India' in P C Joshi and H Rao (ed.), *Reflections on Economic Development and Social Change*, Allied, New Delhi, 1979, pp 429–50 Also, J P S Uberoi, 'Science and Swaraj', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (NS) 2, 1968, pp 119–23
- 3 See M N Srinivas and M N Panini, 'The Development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India', *Sociological Bulletin*, 22(2), 1973, pp 179–215
- 4 See Y Singh, *Indian Sociology Social Conditioning and Emerging Concerns*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1986
- 5 See R Mukherjee, *Sociology of Indian Sociology*, Allied, New Delhi, 1979
- 6 See I P Desai, 'The Concept of Desired Type of Society and the Problems of Social Change', *Sociological Bulletin*, 28(1&2), 1979, pp 1–8
- 7 See A R Desai, 'Relevance of the Marxist Approach to the Study of Indian Society', *Sociological Bulletin*, 30(1), 1981, pp 1–20
- 8 See M S Gore, 'Social Policy and the Sociologist', *Sociological Bulletin*, 32(1), 1983, pp 1–13
- 9 See K R Rao, *Religion, Society and State*, ICSSR, New Delhi, 1985
- 10 See S Saberwal, 'Uncertain Transplants Anthropology and Sociology in India', *Ethnos*, 47(1 & 2), 1982, p 36
- 11 Issues connected with the social determination of the discursive core have not been handled here. In fact, the model of the sociology of knowledge sustained here eschews the prevailing tendency to reduce knowledge to social conditions. This tendency is clearly manifested in Y Singh, op cit, in the context of his reductionist reading of the developments within the Indian sociology of the 1970s and 1980s. Rather, 'knowledge' is viewed as having a specific weight of its own—as practice—and, therefore, amounts to a rejection of the dichotomy between consciousness/knowledge and reality/structure, the former as merely expressing/reflecting the latter. Surely, the concept of 'conditioning' need not just imply social determination, as Singh seems to be assuming, it also signifies production, discursive production in relation to and/or in conjunction with non-discursive (that is, institutions, political events, economic practices and processes) co-ordinates (see n 31 below and the relevant portion in the text). The inspiration here is clearly M Foucault, in particular the mode of analysis codified in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1972. However, within the confines of this paper, we can only delineate some of the issues that bear on such a perspective.
- 12 For an overview of this disposition to define social phenomena in 'substantial' terms, see the essays reproduced in T K Oommen and P N Mukherjee (eds.), *Indian Sociology Reflections and Introspections*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1986. See also R Mukherjee, op cit.
- 13 See, for instance, M N Srinivas, 'Village Studies and their Significance', in his *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, pp 12–35, F G Bailey, 'Two Villages in Orissa (India)' in M Gluckman (ed.), *Closed Systems and Open Minds*, Aldine, London, 1964, pp 52–82, T K Oommen, 'Sociology in India: A Plea for Contextualisation', *Sociological Bulletin*, 32(2), 1983, pp 11–36.
- 14 See L Dumont and D F Pocock, 'For a Sociology of India', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 1, 1957, pp 7–22.
- 15 See, for instance, F G Bailey, 'For a Sociology of India?' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 3, 1959, pp 88–101, Y Atal, 'Sociology in the Indian Campus' in G R Gupta (ed.), *Contemporary India Some Sociological Perspectives (Main Currents in Indian Sociology-I)*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1976, pp 117–31.

- 16 See Y Singh, 'Role of Social Sciences in India A Sociology of Knowledge', *Sociological Bulletin*, 22(1), 1973, pp 14-28, R Mukherjee, 'The Sociologist and the Social Reality', *Sociological Bulletin*, 23(2), 1974, pp 169-92, P C Joshi, op cit
- 17 S Saberwal, *India The Roots of Crises*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1986, p 2
- 18 Ibid, pp 10-35 Such a purely instrumental understanding of history also comes across, in most gross terms, in T K Oommen's writing
To the extent the sociologist's concern to understand the past is tempered by his interest to comprehend the present, there is a critical slice in history in which he ought to be interested, not more and not less Admittedly, this critical slice of relevant history would vary depending upon the problem under investigation
That is, the options here are not between history or sociology, as is usually made out to be, but *how much* history as the case may be, given the prime concern of the sociologist, namely, understanding and explaining the present (Op cit, reprinted in Oommen and Mukherji, op cit, p 253)
In a similar vein, M N Srinivas' claim that the studies of the 1950s and the 1960s (under the impact of British social anthropology and American cultural anthropology) 'enhanced our understanding of historical processes' suggests the endorsement of an instrumental view of history ('Development of Sociology in India An Overview', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22(4), 1987, p 137)
- 19 See V Das, *Structure and Cognition*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982, second edition, pp 1-2
- 20 M N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1972, p 2
- 21 See R Mukherjee, *Sociology of*, op cit and Y Singh, *Indian Sociology*, op cit for an overview
- 22 In asserting thus, I am seeking to dissociate myself from a conception of 'society' as 'founding totality of its partial processes', alternatively, the attempt is to confront the 'openness of the social as the constitutive ground () of the existing' See E Laclau and C Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Stragety Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London, 1985, pp 95, 138-9, passim
- 23 Y Singh, *Indian Sociology*, op cit
- 24 That there are significant continuities between studies of 'social structure' and those of 'social processes' is very evident from Singh's analysis However, he tends to gloss over them in his preoccupation with outlining the various approaches to the study of Indian society Indeed, the defining problematic in studies of social movements remains 'social change' See P N Mukherji, 'Disciplined Eclecticism', *Seminar*, No 254, 1980, pp 38-43, also, T K Oommen, 'Social Movements', in ICSSR, *Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology 1969-79*, Vol 2, Satvahan Publications, New Delhi, 1985 Even those employing Marxist frames have persisted with the totalising 'social change' paradigm See A R Desai, op cit
- 25 See R Mukherjee, *Sociology of*, op cit, pp 1-5
- 26 Ibid, pp 138-9
- 27 R Mukherjee, 'The Sociologist', op cit, reprinted in Oommen and Mukherji, op cit, p 90
- 28 See the appraisal of I P Desai's contribution to Indian sociology by R Mukherjee, 'I P Desai and Sociology of India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21-(4), 1986, p 166 The terms of the appraisal are very suggestive
- 29 In other words, the 'truth' is what corresponds with the real We shall see later that this is not the only standard of 'truth' dominating the discourse of Indian sociology A pragmatic view of 'truth'—the truth is what 'works'—also characterises the discipline
- 30 These dispositions clearly represent the naturalised ethos and disciplinary concentration of Indian sociology The 'reflections and introspections' reproduced in Oommen and Mukherji, op cit, as also the autobiographical probings of I P Desai, 'Craft of Sociology An Autobiographical Perspective', in his *The Craft of Sociology and Other Essays*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1981, pp 18-64, are suggestive of this ethos Likewise, the underlying empiricist dogma in the postulation of research priorities reflects the search for certainty and comprehensiveness in the appraisal of social phenomena
- 31 M Foucault, op cit, pp 163-4 See also n 11 above
- 32 V Das, op cit, p 1

- 33 Ibid., p 3
- 34 L Dumont and D F Pocock, 'For a Sociology of India A Rejoinder to Dr Bailey', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 4, 1960, p 84
- 35 It may be noted that such a dichotomy underlies an emphasis on 'substantiality' seen above The dichotomy, with its focus on observable regularities, consequently formulates concepts as replications of observed reality See also V Das, op cit, pp 2-3
- 36 See L Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Paladin, London, 1972, pp 73-80
- 37 Ibid., pp 38-42 on the 'sociological apperception'
- 38 See V Das, op cit, p 4
- 39 D Maybury-Lewis, 'Foreword' in A Ostor, L Fruzzetti and S Barnett (eds), *Concepts of Person*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p viii
- 40 For these extremes, see A Ostor et al (eds), *ibid* The essays contained in this volume reproduce these extremes in good measure Also, it is important to reiterate that the ideationalist strategy of studying social phenomena from 'within' and 'without' cannot avoid what A K Saran has termed 'the positivistic hubris—the insistence on seeing the human social reality from both the symbolic and the non-symbolic, the internal and the external points of view' ('Review of Contributions to Indian Sociology', 4, *The Eastern Anthropologist*, 15(1), 1962, p 68)
- 41 P Bourdieu, 'What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology A Critical Review*, 32, 1987, pp 1-2
- 42 A more detailed consideration of the materials generated within Indian sociology is necessary to consider the terms of this opposition It would also be illuminating to see the problematic of order, that is to say, a specific configuration of knowledge and power, that underlies this discursive core I make suggestions towards this end in section II of this paper
- 43 Dumont's insistence that explanatory models need not be, and cannot be limited to, a replication of observed reality seems to transcend such a mechanistic conception But this is clearly not sufficient It is imperative to consider the problems that follow from a recognition that the explanatory models have as their object entities which are both made of and by knowing subjects
- 44 P Bourdieu, op cit, p 2
- 45 P Bourdieu, 'The Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge', *Social Science Information*, 12(1), 1973, p 53 Bourdieu has insightfully worked out this form of theoretical knowledge in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977
- 46 See W R de Silva, *From Rita to Dharma*, Pragati Prakashan, Kanara, 1985, p 39 I have disagreements with how and what de Silva works through the formulation 'homo structuralis', which, in the context of his analysis, is equated with Dumont's concept of 'homo hierarchicus', even if in criticism (pp 39-67) But then de Silva may still claim ambivalence!
- 47 See L Dumont, *Homo*, op cit, and *From Mandeville to Marx*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977
- 48 See C A Alvares, *Homo Faber Technology and Culture in India, China and the West 1500-1972*, Allied, New Delhi, 1979, Ch 1
- 49 We may here recall the comment made in n 22 above
- 50 L Dumont, *Homo*, op cit, p 38
- 51 Consider, for instance, this exchange L Dumont responding to T N Madan's, op cit, statement that Indian scholars have merely imitated the westerner's in the matter of sociology, observes
- Does (it) mean that Indian scholars could have made an original contribution within the framework of ('western') sociology and failed to do so—which may be true—or does (it) mean that they should have built up a sociology of their own, basically different from ('western') sociology—in which case he would be entirely wrong? A Hindu sociology is a contradiction in terms (cited in T N Madan, 'For a Sociology of India Some Clarifications', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N S), 1, 1967, p 92
- Characteristically, clarifying his statement, Madan notes
- The fault of the Indian sociologist has not been that he has not built a Hindu sociology, but that he has not made an original contribution to the development and refinement of sociological concepts There cannot be many sociologies, but sociological understanding must take account of social specificity (*Ibid*)

Likewise, D Narain, in his observations on the debate for a sociology of India, notes

If Dumont and Pocock are for comparison and they repeatedly assert they are, then one must agree with Bailey that Indian society, granting all its uniqueness, must still be seen in the context of the general principles of sociology. Concentration on the unique, inevitably tending to exclude, or at least reduce comparison and generalisation, will severely limit knowledge and understanding. ('For a Sociology of India: Some Observations', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (NS), 5, 1971, p. 133)

See also Maybury-Lewis, op cit, pp 8-9

52 See E W Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985

53 Ibid, p. 10

54 A Ostor et al, op cit, p. 224

55 See R Flower (ed.), *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, p. 33

56 See A Ostor et al, op cit

57 Ibid, p. 231. Incidentally, the authors are here reaffirming Dumont's formulation of the anthropological project (pp. 231-2)

58 See Y Singh, *Indian Sociology*, op cit

59 Recall the positions articulated in n. 51 above by way of illustration

60 Reviewed in F H Gareau, 'The Third Revolt against First World Social Science', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 27 (3-4), 1986, pp. 172-89

61 See *Seminar*, no. 112, 1968—issue devoted to discussing 'Academic Colonialism'

62 It is important to see that the homogenising urge need not necessarily articulate into the comparative project, it can also be reflected in, even overlap with, the pragmatist underpinnings of Indian sociology

63 For contrasting viewpoints, see A K Saran, 'India' in J S Roucek (ed.), *Contemporary Sociology*, Peter Owen, London, 1958, pp. 1013-34, and P C Joshi, op cit

64 Surely there is more than a suggestion of complicity in the following observation

An emphasis on change was inevitable in post-independent India. So many things were happening and so fast. And the government had embarked on planned development, and was passing legislation at breakneck speed, was understandably eager to tell everybody that a new order was being ushered in. This appealed to the patriotism of the elite including sociologists and anthropologists. And government funds were available for carrying out research on problems of change and development (Srinivas and Panini, op cit, p. 41)

See also the various presidential addresses of the Indian Sociological Society (Y Singh, *Indian Sociology*, op cit, has an overview, some of these addresses have been reproduced in Oommen and Mukherji, op cit). The 'purpose' and focus of sociological research is invariably defined in the context of social policy

65 See D P Dimitrakos, 'Gramsci and the Contemporary Debate on Marxism', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 16(4), 1986, pp. 415-88, esp. 470-1, although I am not favourably disposed to his presentation of the Gramscian scheme

66 See the body of work reviewed in the Survey Reports of the ICSSR (*Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974, the developments from 1969 to 1979, and also covering some new fields of study, has been surveyed in *Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 1969-79, Satavahan Publications, New Delhi, 1985) and systematically discussed in R Mukherjee, *Sociology of*, op cit, K R Rao, op cit, and Y Singh, *Indian Sociology*, op cit

67 See Srinivas and Panini, op cit, M S A Rao, 'Sociology in the 1980s', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 19(4), 1980, pp. 1810-5, S Saberwal, 'Uncertain Transplants', op cit

68 A sampling of this pragmatism can be had from Oommen and Mukherji, op cit. We may note in this context that A Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 44-8, sees the possibility of a deepening involvement of sociology with the formation of practical social policies or reforms. In essence, this form of pragmatism is endemic to sociology itself. The implications of this for the ordering of scholarly discourses can only be imagined. The marginalisation of the viewpoint represented in, say, A K Saran ('India', op cit,

- and 'Review of', op cit, pp 53-68), we would think, testifies to the power connotations of this pragmatism
- 69 It is precisely this issue that Saberwal's formulation, indicated at the outset of this essay, seems to avoid. An assessment of a 'transplant' cannot be separated from an analysis of its generative sources and principles
- 70 A Giddens, op cit, pp 15-6. See also K Kumar, *Prophecy and Progress*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, pp 13-68. We may note in passing that Marxism (at least as doctrine) cannot be located outside this project of modernity
- 71 At the specific moment of the introduction of sociology in India, it was already constituted in the west. Consequently, sociology offered, and continues to offer, an already constituted field for the interpretation of social domains
- 72 Of course, this is not to ignore the significance of the sort of questioning and analysis offered in part I of this paper
- 73 I am collapsing a whole range of complexities in this one statement. For an inkling of the issues involved, see Hans Kellner, 'Narrativity in History: Post-Structuralism and Since', *History and Theory*, Beiheft 26, 1987, pp 1-29
- 74 A K Saran, 'India', op cit, p 1013
- 75 See, for instance, A Nandy, 'Cultural Frames for Social Transformation. A Credo', *Alternatives*, 12, 1987, pp 113-23, J P S Uberoi, *Science and Culture*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1978, or even T N Madan, *Culture and Development*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983. G C Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, Methuen, New York, 1987, is also illustrative. I am presently engaged in encountering the terrain these discourses inhabit
- 76 If the reader is sensitised to my celebratory reception of Foucault or Bourdieu or, more generally, of the entire range of post-structuralist theorising, he/she is forewarned. I may well be living my revolt within the frame of reference of the dominant legitimacy! And yet, it seems to me that the ongoing critique of the west's most characteristic discourses, routed either through western or non-western critics, seems to be the point at which Western Rationalism preserves the boundaries of sense for itself. I have, perhaps perfunctorily, made indications in this direction with reference to Martin Heidegger (see my 'The Gnostic Vision: Incursions into the Heideggerian Field—A Combative Note', mimeographed). And, Foucault et al., even Bourdieu, cannot be far behind. In Gandhi, and perhaps the Bhakti vision/movement, one could discover possibilities incommensurable with Western Rationalism. Until then, I remain complicit, schizophrenic
- 77 To Prof. T N Madan, Seemanthini Niranjana, Willie de Silva and Valerian Rodrigues, among many others, I am grateful for the encouragement and support. I have hardly had the opportunity to work through their comments and suggestions in their entirety. And that I defer for a more elaborate reading of the discourse(s) of Indian sociology

BOOK REVIEW

Problems of World-View

Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda, *Choose Life. A Dialogue*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, pp 348, Rs 125/-

The book, written in the form of a dialogue between Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda, deals with diverse aspects of human relations ranging from the fundamental philosophical problem of human essence to international politics. The central concern of the discussion is that all life in its general manifestation, and human life in particular, is worthy of the utmost regard. The dignity of life should be defended, against all odds, without any compromise (pp 326-42). In the modern world torn apart with so much prejudice, hatred and strife, this proposition alone is sufficient to confer respectability on the book, although one may not necessarily agree with all the positions taken by Toynbee and Ikeda. The message of love and harmony is not new but the emphasis has a contemporary appeal which imparts urgency and significance to the message. It is not merely confined to the narrow sphere of family or nation but has a universal validity for the entire family of nations. It is important to take note of this message if humanity is to survive against the present crisis.

Man is defined as a self-conscious spiritual being. Although a part of nature and the animal kingdom, man differentiates himself by certain artificial norms and conventions relating to the biological functions of sex and excretion (pp 15-16). Man confers dignity upon sexual relations through the medium of love (p. 18). A living being's egoistic attempt to organise the universe around itself is the condition for, and the expression of, its vitality. Life and egoism are interchangeable terms, according to Toynbee (p. 22). This definition of man primarily as a psychosomatic being is not without problems. Certainly, the authors are aware that man is not an abstraction outside time and space. He is a product of heredity and environment (pp 20-24), but the authors do not place them in a historically conditioned social context. The Freudian bias is obvious in their discussion of the subconscious, assumed to be behind all human actions, thoughts and desires (pp. 26-31). But this subconscious is incapable of objective verification. Human essence assumes diverse aspects and it is an error to reduce it to a single aspect. The essence of man has been the subject of centuries of worldwide philosophical debate. It has been the primary and principal question of philosophy. Ever since the dawn of civilisation human essence has been defined in various forms by various thinkers. To theologians,

man is an incorrigible sinner, to political exponents, he is a political animal, to scientists, the sum of observation, and so on. Feuerbach's crude materialistic assertion that 'Man is what he eats' was ridiculed by Antonio Gramsci, because if it were so 'then the determining matrix of history would be the kitchen and revolutions would coincide with radical changes in the diet of the masses' (*Prison Notebooks*, London, 1978 p. 354). His profound quest for the search of answers to fundamental questions in an age of political turmoil and moral crisis led him to numerous subtle observations. He believed that the nature of the human species is not given by the biological nature of man. To Gramsci, human nature is the complex of social relations. It is the most satisfying answer because it includes the idea of becoming. Man 'becomes', he changes continuously with the changing of social relations (*Prison Notebooks*, p. 355). It posited man in all manifold dimensions, the subject as well as the object of history, in reality as well as in rich diverse potentialities. The last-mentioned element is of far-reaching importance. Its exclusion would stifle living reality in a rigid armour, prevent the bursting forth of the unpredictable, and imprison the human future.

It is, however, true, as the authors argue, that human society is interconnected through a network of rules and customs, and any arbitrary aberration in one field disrupts all others. War, by commanding soldiers to kill fellow-beings, removed normal inhibitions against raping, looting and drug-taking (pp. 18-19), and produced serious moral disorder in society. According to the authors, the major threats to humanity are war and environmental pollution (pp. 37-60, 186-204). War is the greatest evil of the contemporary civilisation and a danger to the dignity of life. The senseless killing leads to social demoralisation. War as well as the death penalty for civil crimes and murders ought to be abolished, as they undervalue the dignity of life. No human being has a moral right to deprive another human being of his life. Killing is irrevocable, whereas a living human being has the possibility of reforming. But under exceptional circumstances, when living becomes exceedingly humiliating, the individual should reserve the right to terminate life. Of course, suicide is permissible to uphold the dignity of life, not to lower it. The nuclear arms race has posed an unprecedented threat to the very survival of mankind. It can wipe out the entire human civilisation. Consequently, atomic disarmament is the first necessity for survival of the human race (pp. 186-89). Our planet is constantly threatened with the terror of total destruction at the push of a button (p. 199). Everyone should recognise the danger and compel the respective governments to destroy all nuclear arsenals. The nuclear race is senseless because in nuclear warfare there can be no such thing as a costly victory. It is absolutely irrational as it can result only in mass suicide (p. 204). It is a matter of grave concern not only to the participants in the dialogue but to the entire humanity. We are aware that a number of governments, institutions, groups and associations as

well as individuals are striving, and with some measure of success, to create a nuclear-free world, but as the danger continues to persist it is a noteworthy message and a primary agenda for political action. The presentation of the problem may not be original but it is no doubt too overwhelming a problem to be ignored by the modern world. It is an eloquent reminder to the persistence of the nuclear danger.

The second cause of grave concern to humanity is environmental pollution and the destruction of the eco-system, which has reached alarming proportions (p. 56). In attempting to conquer the natural world, mankind has upset the rhythm of nature. The ecological imbalances and pollution of air, water and food threaten to destroy mankind. The most obvious case is that of accumulation of carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere which produces a greenhouse effect and causes the atmospheric temperature to rise. The countless minute floating particles of dust and other matter block out the light of the sun. The dumping of oil into the seas inhibits evaporation of seawater and creates climatic alterations (p. 43). The problems have become especially acute due to high-rise construction and rapid urbanisation. Large cities all over the world are plagued with problems of bad roads, inadequate water supplies, poor sewerage, housing shortages, improper garbage disposal, scanty greenery, shutting out of light and breeze, traffic congestion, high land prices, environmental pollution, dehumanisation and so on. Our present evils are human-made and ought to be human-cured as well (p. 55). Humankind must clean the pollution, and refrain from producing any more if it is to survive the impending ecological disaster. Inaction in such circumstances is tantamount to suicide, it is virtually self-destruction. It, however, should not lead us to the anachronistic belief (as is common to both the authors, pp. 45, 60) that religion is the only possible solution to the predicament facing humankind.

The authors ignore the threat posed by the great social divide between the rich and the poor and the tremendous economic disparities in the concentration of wealth on a world scale. There can be no hope of everlasting peace in a world dominated economically by a few multinational companies. In their political pronouncements both the authors express an outright anti-leftist bias. The Soviet society is condemned for its totalitarian intolerance and imposition of an alien ideology (pp. 70-76). Of course, both the authors seek to conveniently conceal this bias under the cover of eclecticism. The United States is also criticised for its involvement in the Vietnamese and Korean wars and also for racial discrimination at home (pp. 161-66) but not for its overall imperialist policies on a world scale and as the biggest merchant of death having the largest exporting armaments industry. But what many modern readers would consider as ridiculous is the fantastic notion common to both authors that communism is a religious variant of the Judiac species (pp. 179-80). Ikeda condemns both capitalism and socialism. Capitalism has sacrificed the happiness of

the human being to the pursuit of profit. Socialism has suppressed human liberty for the sake of standardised equality (p 100) Toynbee hopes that the coming century will see the establishment of a global human society which will be socialistic at the economic level and free minded at the spiritual level (p 101) It is a wonderful utopia indeed!

To the authors, the labour movement is nothing but an expression of human greed Toynbee believes that in all industrial countries where maximum private profit is the motive for production, the competitive economic system will become unworkable and socialism will eventually be imposed by a dictatorial regime Ikeda argues that if the leaders and members of the labour movement could equip themselves with religious ideas, it will be possible to avert both uncontrollable social disorder and dictatorship. To social scientists and other serious contemporary readers such ideas will appear to be absurd. The so-called welfare states are no alternative to the problem of economic inequality The real problem of the so-called welfare states is not that economic growth slows down or that citizens lose independence, or the loss of competitive spirit or creative talents, as Ikeda argues (p. 102), but that they are quite incapable of providing for the genuine welfare or economic equality of the citizens, as they cannot do away with the structural inequalities of the capitalist system.

Their position on other social questions appear to be more tenable. They are critical of the women's liberation movement It is argued that women cannot be freed from the task of housewives and mothers, though society should create opportunities for the full development and display of their talents (p 108). Also, the unlimited population growth should be checked as it will destroy the respect for life Human dignity requires that we should breed optimum and not maximum number of children (p 112) Similarly, the contention that the privileges of the establishment are irreconcilable with the dignity of man, cannot be disputed

There are inherent problems in the world vision of both the authors which is coloured by their religious beliefs. The authors argue that utopias have lost appeal in the modern world because of the increasing immiserisation in human society and the uncertainty that fulfilment of desires can spell true happiness (pp 322-23). But they merely substitute the old utopias by new Grand Utopias Two such utopias are a single world government and a single world religion (pp 225-46), both of which are contrary to the current trend of world history towards pluralism and diversification. Moreover, the assumed political and spiritual unity cannot provide a cover for deep-rooted contradictions in the modern world economic system It is nothing more than wishful thinking, well-meaning but ineffectual The discussion on religion, wrapped in an aura of profundity, is something utterly incongruous with modern reason Religion has no functional utility, so to speak, for the scientific human being For the man of science, all human problems can be analysed and solved scientifically, without any compulsion to

restore metaphysical or religious illusions. If the reader ignores the metaphysical content of the book, the rest of it remains an important contribution for highlighting some of the critical problems confronting humankind in the contemporary age, with the central message that human life is worthy of the highest respect and love ought to remain the highest human value in the face of technological onslaught and the persistent danger of nuclear warfare.

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ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LEFT FRONT GOVERNMENT IN WEST BENGAL

There has been a flourishing of Democratic and Trade Union Rights of the people. There are no Black Acts like ESMA in operation here. Nobody gets arrested on political grounds.

West Bengal remains free of Caste and Communal strife. Members of the minority communities consider the State a safe heaven of peace. There are very few instances of persecutions perpetrated on women, especially, compared to the National scene.

West Bengal has an enviable record of Law and Order. The crime rate is negligibly low. Riots are conspicuous only by their absence. Darjeeling is peaceful with the political solution of the G N E F imbroglio.

Significant achievements have been made in redistributive Land Reforms. 12.57 lakhs of acres of ceiling-surplus agricultural land could vest to the State (and the figure is no fewer than one-sixth of the totality of such vested land in the country). 8.60 lakh acres of the vested land have been redistributed among the rural poor and the landless. And the figure represents nearly 21 per cent of the total amount of redistributed land in the country. In all, till date, more than 18 lakhs of landless peasants have been benefited—and nearly 14 lakhs of adhiyars or bargadars (sharecroppers) have had their rights duly registered. And such figures continue to grow.

Redistributive land reforms have ensured the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. No fewer than 56 per cent of the recipients of ceiling-surplus vested lands belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Similarly, 30 per cent of the total number of registered bargadars (sharecroppers) belong to Scheduled Castes whilst more than 12 per cent belong to Scheduled Tribes.

Production of foodgrains has never looked back after touching the all-time record of 103 lakh tonnes in 1987–88. Currently, the State produces the food requirement of 8 per cent of the National population while physically the State represents but a mere 2.7 per cent of the geographical area in India.

Democracy at the grass-root level has been ensured with the holding of regular elections to the three-tier Panchayati Raj institutions (Zila Parishad, Panchayat and Gram Panchayat) on the basis of adult franchise.

Elections are being regularly held in the 116 urban Local Bodies in the State, and principles of participatory democratisation upheld. The principle of reduction of Voting Age to 18 years was introduced by the State Government in 1978, long before the principle was thought as important at the National level.

There has been a cascading down of financial and administrative powers to the elected Panchayati Raj institutions and urban Local Bodies towards plan formulation and plan implementation—in a demonstrative exercise of pro-people decentralisation. 50 per cent of the State plan-Budget is allocated to the districts. The two tiers of decentralised planning are the Block-level and District-level Planning Committees and this exercise has been in operation since a

long time before the present-day emphasis being laid on at the National level

Power has been made a Priority Sector and it comprises of the total plan-size Implementation of the Bakreswa has been taken up as a Challenge against the Centre's poverty and deprivation

Centre's prevarication with sanctioning of the Haldia Petro-Chemical Complex has served to stall this very important project with its upstream and downstream spin-off effects Nevertheless, the State Government has gone boldly ahead with promotion of Industrial growth with attractive package of incentives The Electronics Complex at Salt Lake is a shining example of the State Government's endeavours

Spectacular performances have been recorded in the Cottage and Small-scale sectors There are, at present, more than three lakh small industrial units in full operation

The Teesta Barrage project in North Bengal, one of the biggest irrigation projects in India, is being implemented by the State despite lack of adequate support from the Union Government

Health care facilities are being reached to the people via a planned network of 8126 sub-centres, 1192 health centres, 76 rural hospitals, 13 district hospitals, 31 sub-divisional hospitals, 60 State and General and Special Hospitals There are also 11 hospitals attached to the State Medical Colleges and Post-graduate Institutes

The Food and Civil Supplies system of the State is equipped with 2745 Ration Shops in the statutory rationing areas and with 17045 Fair-price Shops in the rural areas and this is the largest such network in the country

In Pisciculture, West Bengal contributes no less than 75 per cent of India's total fish-seed requirements It also supplies more than one-third of the country's total Table-fish production The State has bagged the Highest Productivity Awards for three years running for inland fish production

Education has been made free up to Class XII The State Government aims at providing One School at least in each village, and the State Government is forging ahead in fulfilment of the task

Various kinds of Self-employment Schemes for unemployed youth are being widely taken up These are the Self-employment Scheme for Registered Unemployed (SESRU), the Small Scale Entrepreneurship Programme (SSEP) and the Additional Employment Programme (AEP)

The cultural scene in the State has a bright outlook with the thriving of not only the Nandan, the State Film Centre and Rupayan, the Colour Film and Sound Recording Laboratory, but also of the Bangla Academy, Nepali Academy, Urdu Academy, Natya Academy and Sangeet Academy Nepali and Urdu have been recognised as official languages in the State Alchiki has been approved as a script for the spread of the Santhali Language The Yuva Bharati Krirangan Stadium (capacity 1 lakh) is one of the largest in East Asia A Department of Science and Technology has been set up

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

...AY DAY

To bid farewell to the arms
and to welcome peace

To resist autocracy, separatism
and communal forces

In our struggle to stabilize
democracy and keep trade union
and other hard-earned rights.

LET THE WORKERS AND
TOILING MASSES UNITE

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Building Block by Building Block: A Tribute to Muzaffar Ahmad Ashok Mitra	3
Reflections on Economic Reform in Hungary K.K. Dasgupta	8
Perestroika and the Third World: The Changing Status of the Concept of 'Neocolonialism' Venkatesh Athreya	28
Industrial Organisation in the GDR and Future Possibilities Jaya Mehta	37
Perestroika: Reflections on the Theory of Power Sudipta Kaviraj	50
The Politics of Perestroika: Comments on Kaviraj's Paper Rajeev Bhargava	59
Fertility Trends and Population Policies and Programmes in Socialist Europe B. Debroy	66
Book Reviews	88

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Editorial

As the process of political and economic reform in the socialist world gathers pace, we go to press with this edition of *Social Scientist* carrying the second instalment of a set of papers on the subject, which were presented at a seminar held early this year. Though the effort at economic reform in the socialist countries is not altogether new and can be traced at least as far back as the early 1960s, the current wave of change is remarkable for its pace, its spread and the fact that it has touched on questions relating to the political organisation of socialist societies. The significance of this development for the idea of socialism itself is the concern of Sudipta Kaviraj's paper, which starts with the premise that the project called *Perestroika* is primarily political. It argues that the principal fall-out of that project is that it shows up the undertheorisation of power in socialist theory, which while coming to terms with the question of State and revolution under capitalism, has paid far less attention to the formulation of the potential problems of power under socialism. Seen in that light, the reforms under way implicitly raise a fundamental question: whether the form of State that emerged under Stalin in the Soviet Union was contingent upon the circumstances of the time (in particular the encirclement and threat to the first socialist State) or the necessary form of State under socialism. Kaviraj himself suggests that, while the social formation in the Soviet Union is socialist and should continue, the form of State should change in the interests of socialism. The conditions of the time demand an escape from absolutism. This would necessarily involve inducting elements of 'liberalism' into the political order, where liberalism is seen as 'a way of organising discourse which appears to be integrally connected to modernity'.

Needless to say, Kaviraj's argument has an intrinsic appeal, for, by implicitly delineating the 'historical necessity' of both the absolutist State and its subsequent dissolution, it absolves the spectator of the obligation to judge either phenomenon. But judge we must, contends Rajeev Bhargava in his comment, for that judgement is of relevance to the future course of events both in the Soviet Union and to our own context. And that judgement must not merely assess the degree to which the State form built up during the seventy years since the Bolshevik revolution tallies with the Marxist-Leninist conception of the State under socialism, but also, whether the induction of elements of 'liberalism' would take it closer to an ideal in the making.

In fact, the term liberalism, inasmuch as it echoes an understanding that gives priority to private benefit, subjectively perceived, is not without problems. And those problems assume significance when seen in the light of the direction taken by the process of economic reform in many socialist countries. At the core of those reforms is the view that

when choosing between the relative roles of 'plan' and 'market', the flexibility offered by the latter is of greater benefit than the costs associated with atomistic decision-making and the fact that the nature of a market is defined by a set of structures that also predefine the distribution of economic benefits

The difficulties these factors create for proceeding with economic reform is highlighted by Jaya Mehta's article on the experience with Lieberman-type reforms in the GDR, which though moderate when compared to the current Soviet reforms, were in the same direction. They provided greater flexibility to the enterprises with regard to the composition of output, the average wage and the number of workers employed and allowed a significant part of the material balance in the system to be ensured through inter-enterprise trade. However, with the price structure left in the hands of the government, price adjustments failed to materialise at a pace required by an economy like that of the GDR's, which though small was extremely diversified. Partial decentralisation, it appeared, was an inadequate substitute for central planning. The Soviet reforms are attempting to meet this problem with provision for enterprise level price-fixation, combined with a degree of exposure to international competition. Sensing the dangers inherent in such a process in an unequal world, the GDR opted for a return to quantitative planning, accompanied by reorganisation of production units into vertical and horizontal combines aimed at internalising within a single decision-making unit the supply of raw materials, R&D investment and promotion of external trade in the area concerned. Flexibility was sought to be achieved by reducing the range of supplies, prices and performance criteria imposed from outside.

Unlike the GDR, Hungary chose to proceed further in the direction of decentralisation through the market with the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968. In his article K K Dasgupta shows that such decentralisation has as its corollary, the dilution of planning in the sense of provision of precise targets for output and investment and the setting of administered prices. The fall-out is not merely greater flexibility, but inflation, unemployment and a much higher degree of inequality. To boot, if liberalism touches external trade policy as well, the transition to a more decentralised regime is accompanied by a huge build-up in debt. The evidence so far seems to suggest that the induction of flexibility through a liberal, 'market-based' regime, involves costs that are both substantial as well as borne unequally by different sections of the population.

In an accompanying article, Venkatesh Athreya looks at the impact of the new thinking in the Soviet Union on perspectives regarding neocolonial exploitation and the inequalising tendencies inherent in the capitalist world system. Finally, Vivek Debroy focuses on population and fertility trends in Eastern Europe and the challenges they imply in terms of the need for technical change and constraints to agricultural development.

ASHOK MITRA*

*Building Block by Building Block:
A Tribute to Muzaffar Ahmad*

Does not romanticism constitute at least one-half of what passes for communist faith? A communist is a revolutionary, pledged to the demolition of the existing social structure. He, in the beginning, as good as builds castles in the air. It is perhaps still the regime of feudalism, the intrusion of foreign capital and domestic primary accumulation both are of a perfunctory nature and the masses are stuck to the mores and levels of consciousness of the Middle Ages. Alternately, it is really the heyday of the transnational corporations: they call the tune, at each stage, in the running of the polity, formal independence does not mean a thing, merchant capital from overseas determines who the country's nominal rulers are going to be, the army and the police are heavily infiltrated, the terms of trade are permanently tilted against the country's exports, the stratagem of transfer pricing makes a mockery of so-called free market transactions in the international sphere, most of the populace live a claustrophobic existence, they take it for granted that, along with laws of nature, they have to take for granted the laws of exploitation of man by man too, they are to be imposed upon for ever, for generations together, and that is all history is about. Literacy is denied to the masses, along with the basic needs of health, nutrition and sanitation. Occasional famines and bouts of pestilence kill off thousands of the citizenry, if you could call them that, for most often the right of suffrage and other such fundamental human rights remain beyond their pale. Even if they have the vote, they, for dear life, can exercise it only in terms of guidelines laid down by the gentry. Irrespective of whether the imperialists continue to rule directly, or *compradors* of this or that description are nominally in charge, the setting is without question that of medieval tyranny.

Only a romantic of an extraordinary genre, belonging to a far out sect of day-dreamers, can look forward to a communist future in this ambience, or hypothesise with any seriousness about a fundamental restructuring of production relations and, along with it, of other human relations. Such people will be a handful. They will have to operate stealthily, and lead a clandestine existence. They will suffer. Some of

* Advisory Editor, *Social Scientist*

them will be caught and shot, or undergo terms of imprisonment. Even in circles which, for diverse reasons, are drawn to them, they will remain objects of ridicule and derision, and will be advised from time to time to examine their heads.

A Muzaffar Ahmad is a rarity, almost a *curiosum*. It is in a setting as described above that he went about organising, of all things, a communist party in the colonial-feudal tract that India was circa 1920s. To suggest that the task was daunting will be an understatement. Hazard was Muzaffar Ahmad's constant companion. He would move in and out of prison, in and out of underground existence. He formed cells, which would disintegrate in no time; either the police would catch up with him, or there would be an abdication of courage on the part of some of those he had taken as comrades. Resources would be, for most of the time, either short or non-existent. There would be no shelter, always some doubt where the next meal was going to come from, but he would carry on, the mad visionary, the revolutionary who does not flinch from taking the long view whatever the seeming hopelessness of the circumstances.

Muzaffar Ahmad was therefore the quintessential romantic. Much of what the communist movement in India is today has grown out of that romanticism. And yet, it was just one of the many ingredients. You must know how to dream, and what to dream, but a revolutionary movement is not bred of dreams alone. You must also know—or teach yourself—how to begin with the base, and how to organise this beginning. Which means you must be patient as well as meticulous. Much of the spadework has to be done in great secrecy, for much of the work will be dangerous, if you are caught, you could be either shot or tortured or condemned to a long, very long spell in jail. The network of an organisation will perhaps be put together, it will be destroyed in no time, it will have to be built afresh, time after time. You have to stay this whole stretch.

But building the base—and organising a communist party from scratch—calls for, apart from patience and acumen, an additional attribute and of an altogether different sort. You have to discover comrades, and persuade them to join you and stick it out. All you can promise them is sweat and toil and the ever present prospect of being picked up by the police. So you need to have, tucked inside you, a magnet to attract, you must also ensure that a fair majority of those who come to you are hopelessly sold on your dream, and your dream becomes their dream, it becomes the collective dream. Let there be no illusion in regard to this matter: as much as the allure of the distant goal, what is equally called for here is possession of a subjective charm on the part of the leader. This charm must be a compendium of love and fire. The comrades will be drawn to the leader not just because he has quite outstanding organisational skill and has an eerie ability to enter into the psychology of young people coming from a particular environment, he must, in addition, radiate affection. There must be no

dress in this affection. The leader has to transform himself into a foster father, and his role will extend from nursing a sick comrade in an underground den to taking detailed care of his family, including, for instance, looking after the education of his children, and, yes, marrying off his daughters. He must also enquire into the mundane and not so mundane roots of crises that occasionally threaten to overwhelm a political activist in the course of his daily perambulations, and help the latter to overcome such crises. Muzaffar Ahmad could build the party in the manner he did because he did all this. He evoked a fierce loyalty. The genesis of that loyalty was unalloyed mutual affection. The love he exuded, never quite demonstrative and yet deep and strong, was his principal capital stock.

But this man came to his historical role because he was, at the same time, burdened by an extraordinary intuition. He knew it was important to dream extravagantly. That by itself was not enough. It was equally important to learn how to organise cells, underground as well as overground, and develop coordinating networks, building block by building block. That certainly called for the binding mixture of love and loyalty, of the love which directly led to loyalty. Even that was however not enough for the creation of a viable communist party. A communist party, Muzaffar Ahmad, had reached the conclusion at a very early stage, cannot do without literacy. The cadres must teach themselves, and teach others. They must learn, and pass on to others what they have learnt. A communist movement is, by definition, a subversive movement, its objective is to destroy the existing structure. That task cannot be accomplished by terrorist manoeuvres, whether sporadic or sustained, the masses have to be involved. Which means your ideas must be made to spread like prairie fire amongst them. Without literacy, there is little hope of success for any such incendiary activity. Literacy within the movement, but, above all, literacy for those without whom it is inconceivable to plot a revolution, that is, the masses. Muzaffar Ahmad knew what that was. The mad hatter was also a man full of practicalities, and equipped with a most concrete mind. Which is why he had this obsession with party literature. Scan his entire career, you will be amazed at the number of journals and of bulletins he had himself published, or associated himself with, one after another. A news sheet with one masthead would come out for a few weeks, the police would catch up with it, it would close down, but, never mind, tomorrow was another day, tomorrow would see the birth of another party news sheet under another masthead. That too would fold because the police would once more grow wise to its existence. But the endeavour to reach out to the people through the written word would continue, week after week, month after month, year after year. A communist party, Muzaffar Ahmad convinced himself and in turn convinced the other comrades, is worth little if it does not learn and re-learn, if it does not keep itself abreast of happenings and problems, not just inside the country, but also unfolding elsewhere, for is not the

communist movement an international movement, a solidarity representing the brotherhood of the world's working class—whichever country they might individually belong to, are they not bound together by a common struggle and a common dream?

You always come back to the crucial phenomena at work. The modalities are all incidental to, mere adjuncts of, what goes on at the base. The base consists of the masses, the oppressed, rack-rented peasantry, the exploited urban working class, the discontented, frustrated sections of the lower bourgeoisie. The task of building movements among the masses has therefore to be accorded the highest priority. The cadres must go to the people, feel their pulse, know how their mind is working on this or that issue of the moment, and provide the party with the feedback. There is the other, equally essential political task too, organising the flow of the feedback in the other direction, the people have to be told of the party point of view, the masses have to be moulded in the manner the party considers to be the best for advancing the revolutionary cause. This places stress once more on strengthening not just the inner core, but also the network of front organisations amongst the peasantry, industrial workers, unemployed youth, students, teachers, women, mercantile employees, government employees, *et al*. And there is then the residual, but crucial, duty to build bridges of understanding between these mass organisations, which are each a part of the party and yet a little away from it.

Muzaffar Ahmad thought about each such detail. He would in fact take enormous pains over going into details. That was in his constitution. He would fuss over a particular spot in the X-ray chart of a comrade struck down by tuberculosis, he would fuss over the correct spelling of a name mentioned on page 112 or page 219 of a party publication, he would fuss over the list of office-bearers of a newly set up front organisation in an area where the party was trying to penetrate to the core. He was a cantankerous man, because he was a revolutionary zealot, he could not afford to see things get fouled up.

Must one now not mention something else? There can be no worthwhile party of the revolution if discipline is slack. A communist party is a party of love and mutual loyalty and enduring camaraderie, but it is also a party of system and rigour. And Muzaffar Ahmad used to be obsessive on the matter of party discipline, to enforce which he would be both obdurate and merciless. This was the ingrained Leninism in him. You have to keep honing the party, chiselling it, sharpening its potential as the principal revolutionary weaponry. The weak therefore have to go, the dross must be eliminated. Those found wanting will have to be excluded. It may cause a temporary wrench in the heart, but, since they have been found wanting, comrades will have to be rendered into former comrades, with no scope for exchanging further bourgeois courtesies.

Not many can subsist on the single staple of a distant dream. Muzaffar Ahmad did. He had little illusion that, during his own life

span, he would reach anywhere near to the consummation of his dream. He was right. When he died, his party, the party he helped to construct, building block by building block, was on the run, and was being viciously laid about by those in authority and revolution was very far indeed. That hardly diminishes the man. On the contrary, it actually enhances his stature. The mad hatters of yesterday come to their kingdom once the tomorrow arrives, the tomorrow is their very special creation, they gave it shape through their dreams, the hard reality that they will not be around when the tomorrow arrives does not undermine the greatness of their vision. This is Muzaffar Ahmad's centenary year. Let us be candid about it, the point is still not clinched whether the dream he dreamt is on the threshold of realisation. Perhaps it is not. Perhaps at the end of only another half-a-century, the Indian revolution will cease to be an open-ended question, and the doubts will be resolved. That is what is known as the long view of history. Muzaffar Ahmad knew what history was about. He helped to create it. It is still taking shape.

K K DAS GUPTA*

Reflections on Economic Reform in Hungary

In this paper an attempt has been made to examine a few of the important conceptual issues and practical problems of the Hungarian economy since the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968. In the process, the debate on the nature of the Hungarian plan model, implications of the structural changes of micro-economic organs in different branches, the direction of the regulatory mechanism in the present period, characteristics of the second economy, factors responsible for adoption of 'tranquil' agricultural policy and the controversy on the issue of full employment in socialism have been analysed for identifying mainly the qualitative dimensions of the present reform in Hungary.

It is assumed at the very beginning that in the broad sense of the term, Hungary is a centrally planned economy with its own specificities. As is well-known, the NEM (the New Economic Mechanism) in Hungary in 1968 did not abandon central planning although obligatory plan targets were removed from medium term and annual plans. Also, directives and economic levers of the pre-NEM period were replaced by 'economic regulators', which were instruments of control of an indirect nature but were, in the final analysis, extremely important for guiding the national planned economy. From the days of NEM, the character of the Hungarian plan model became such that it 'preserved central planning, but changed its sphere of operation and methods. Instead of compulsory directives, market relations and market prices were established. The central plan was compulsory for the government but not for the firms. Thus the former, instead of compulsory orders and laws, tried to use indirect economic regulators to influence and direct firms' activities.¹

The first point that must be kept in mind when analysing the nature of 'market relations' and 'market mechanism' in Hungary is that these two expressions do not have the same meaning as in market economies. Today, when the Hungarian leadership is contemplating introduction of a new set of reforms for the management of the economy, it is advocating wider market mechanism through empowering the enterprises by proper legislations and also encouraging these to partici-

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pate in international economic relations on a larger scale. In particular terms, enterprises have been given autonomy to trade both inside and outside Hungary and make profit at prevailing domestic and international market prices. In order to be successful in this endeavour, enterprises have to be conscious of cost and quality, maintain efficiency and must derive economic advantages from a spirit of competition with other enterprises for a share of the domestic and international market. The main efficiency criterion in performances of enterprises from the days of NEM has been profitability. It is still the same today. But all the elements of autonomy have been set within the constraint of a regulatory mechanism.

A DIGRESSION ON 'NEITHER PLAN NOR MARKET' MODEL OF HUNGARY DURING NEM

Tamas Bauer, a noted Hungarian economist, has characterised the Hungarian model as neither 'plan' nor 'market' during NEM. By plan he meant the particularities associated with the Soviet type of planning whereas by market he wanted to mean the specificities of a capitalist market economy. 'It is the lack of aggregation and disaggregation in planning', Bauer says, 'the fact that plan figures are submitted only for consultation and not for approval, and that enterprises generally have to buy materials and not to apply for them, that makes the system different from traditional Soviet type planning'.² Bauer's contention therefore is that a plan does not remain a plan if it does not correspond to elaboration, formulation and approval as in the Soviet Union.

It is correct as Bauer argues that bargaining has ceased to be the main activity of enterprise managers and state officials with regard to micro-plan tasks.³ In the Soviet planning procedure this used to be until recently a very important activity. In fact what was usually known as 'counter-planning' in the Soviet practice has wide room for bargaining although by definition a 'counter plan' was an improved plan. NEM in Hungary allowed much more flexibility and a *precise* correspondence between *ex-ante* and *ex-post* plan figures was not a requirement. This was definitely an important deviation from the hitherto existing Soviet type of planning.

With regard to the nature of market within the framework of NEM one distinct deviation from the Soviet type of planning is the emergence of the market for producers' goods. But the existence of two spheres of money, that is, enterprise money and household money, is a great hindrance to the development of commodity-money relationship to the degree required for the establishment of a developed market. At present however there is a great pressure from knowledgeable circles that the two spheres of money should be merged and no one will be surprised if this takes place very soon. Even without this problem there are many constraints in the market mechanism that NEM created.

In the Hungarian producers' goods market, the enterprises enjoy monopolistic privileges. Therefore free choice exists only formally. The buyers' position is weakened by a strong sellers' market. This is a typical picture of imperfections of a market in which enterprises enjoy monopolistic privileges. In market economies also these problems are in existence sometimes acutely. Therefore, if in Hungary there is no market in the strict sense because of imperfections, then the same could be said about the capitalist world as well.⁴ But when the role of prices in the market is brought under consideration Bauer's contention becomes much more realistic and acceptable. Kornai, in numerous studies, has called attention to the asymmetry in the price sensitivity in a shortage economy. Enterprises often adjust their product-mix to the relative profitability of the products (output side) but cannot adjust their purchases of materials to relative prices (input price).⁵ One of the main characteristics of a socialist economy is that basically it is a shortage economy. Ellman has contended in this connection that a market economy's specificity is of demand constraint whereas that of a centrally planned economy is of supply constraint.⁶

One of the imperfections of a socialist economy even with a market mechanism like that of Hungary is that prices do not have that much of clearing role. Because of a wide range of tax exemptions and subsidies, the enterprises are not sufficiently dependent on revenues from the market. In Kornai's opinion, the enterprises, in the circumstances, operate basically on 'soft budget' constraints. Nyers and Tardos have made the remark that 'in practice, enterprises are controlled by the central organs, by the visible hand without use of the direct methods of immediate control'.⁷

In the ultimate analysis, the NEM put 'the responsibility of supply' to the enterprises with sufficient advantage from a more developed market mechanism during NEM than in the past. Szamueli has argued that the Hungarian NEM model of 1968 is of a third kind differing from the Soviet and Yugoslav models. As far as the market was concerned it was not as free in Hungary as in Yugoslavia.⁸ This explains the reason to some extent of the nature of 'budget constraint' in Kornai's definition within which the Hungarian enterprises have to operate. Szamueli has made an interesting revelation. In the 1966 guidelines for NEM, the decision of financing of the investment at the enterprise level remained with the centre but the writings of W. Brus influenced the Hungarian planners tremendously for making a sweeping change from the earlier position.⁹

In the absence of direct control by the centre in the planning process especially at the micro-level, in the NEM period, it was 'a regulation through consensus' according to many because, in spite of the autonomy of the enterprises, it was an unwritten agreement that they would adjust their activities to the expectations of the authority. Schweitzer called this phenomenon 'economic control based on the responsibility of the enterprises for supply'.¹⁰ He argued that the market mechanism

introduced by the NEM provided flexibility to the enterprises in their sales decisions to a great extent but the nature of control on the market was for realising the 'responsibility of supply' of enterprises. Since this responsibility, taken in isolation, was a pre-NEM task, Schweitzer was critical of the continuation of this responsibility.¹¹

In the 'neither plan nor market' model, in the absence of Soviet type of planning, there is not much room for bargaining in the traditional sense as Bauer has pointed out. But according to one author, within a framework of controlled market mechanism which Tardos has interestingly designated as '*eine gemischte Wirtschaft*' along with socialist planning there is sufficient possibility for bargaining of a different nature. He even designates the NEM as the 'plan bargaining model'.¹² The author argues

Central determination and enforcement of a uniform set of economic regulation has yielded to a system of selective determination and selective enforcement of economic regulators. Integral to this, negotiation and bargaining have emerged as the means by which economic regulators are selectively determined and enforced. Through the negotiation of regulators, the centre has an indirect mechanism for influencing enterprise performance. For example, through the selective enforcement of economic regulators, the centre can promote the expansion of chosen industries, such as in the export sector where the earning of hard currency plays a crucial role in the balance of payments. Selective enforcement of economic regulators could also be used to assure that enterprises remain solvent while fulfilling CMEA contracts.¹³

Such bargaining is possible and has been in practice for lowering the rate of interest on borrowing by enterprises, greater subsidy, tax relief and so on. The predominance of the 'ratchet principle' in the wage regulator, that is, the dependence of wage increase on past performance (incrementalism) created room for bargaining at the enterprise level. It is obvious that the 'ratchet principle' in the wage regulator created a circularity in the sense that offering a wage incentive was not possible according to the guidelines of NEM with higher profit expectation.

In spite of these grounds for bargaining in the Hungarian model, it is distinctly different from the classical bargaining model of the Soviet type and also from the Yugoslav model which is also described by many as a 'bargaining model', of course of a different nature. Szamueli is correct when he places Hungary as having a third model, the other two emanating from the planning practices of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The general impression that one gets from an examination of the viewpoints outlined above is that there is not enough 'market' in Hungarian planning although if one accepts Bauer's contention there is not enough 'planning' either. But that is not a problem because 'reform' implies eliminating the constraints of planning. In fact, the criticism of Nyers and Tardos of the 'visible hand' of central control in NEM was a

reiteration of what the Yugoslavs contended before the introduction of the so-called '*laissez-faire* model of socialism' in 1965 in Yugoslavia. At that time even the expression 'visible hand' was used in the same sense¹⁴

PROBLEM OF BEOS AND THE NEED OF STRUCTURAL CHANGES OF MICRO-ORGANS

The organisation structure of micro-organs in Hungary has not remained the same over a period of time. It would therefore be useful to point out the direction of changes. It has to be noted at the outset, that in Hungarian planning terminology, micro-organs of economic management not only in the industrial but also in other branches could be rendered as 'enterprises' in English. They have been, until the present phase of the reform that is outlined below, juridically independent separate economic entities, whether they are 'firms' or 'farms' or 'combines' as the case may be. In the seventies, in Hungary as in other East European socialist countries and in the USSR, there was a tendency towards establishment of Big Economic Organizations (BEOs) by amalgamation, both horizontal and vertical. In English these amalgamated enterprises are designated in economic literature as 'associations' and interestingly as 'enterprises' also. In the case of the latter, amalgamation led to the formation of bigger enterprises and the amalgamating units were known as 'establishments'. The process of formation of BEOs in Hungary could be traced even before 1960. But it gained momentum from 1961 onwards up to 1978 when the whole question of providing justification for the continuation of BEOs was raised from all corners.

Interestingly, whereas between 1950 and 1960 the number of enterprises came down from 1,427 to 1,368 (a reduction of 6.7 per cent), in the plan period 1961-65, the number became 840, a reduction of 37 per cent from the previous period. This process of centralisation continued even after NEM was introduced in 1968. During the ten year period 1968-1978, there was a further spurt in the formation of BEOs and the number in 1978 came down to 293. One of the arguments presented in support of recentralisation even after NEM had proclaimed total autonomy of enterprises and complete decentralisation in the matter of decision making was that the advantages of decentralisation could be exploited better by the enterprises if the organisations were larger.¹⁵ Another opinion was that the centre tried to solve the problem of cooperation between micro-units by forming BEOs. It strengthened enterprise autarky and restricted the economy's adaptability. At the same time the permanent shortage situation made certain enterprises 'responsible for supply'. This was rather more feasible by BEOs. 'What is most important', Antal adds, 'both the control agencies and the firms consider it natural that the disadvantages independent from the firm—that is, those caused by the market—should be eliminated'.¹⁶

But in the process, the advantages of the market were also eliminated considerably.

In the late seventies the record of performances of these highly centralised enterprises was extremely unsatisfactory. The trend of decline in efficiency could even be noticed from the middle seventies. It is true that Hungary's efforts in establishing BEOs were in line with similar efforts in the USSR and other East European socialist economies, but that did not give license for inefficiency.

The nature of concentration and centralisation in Hungarian BEOs can be understood if one recalls that whereas in western developed countries in the middle seventies, 15-45 per cent of firms had working strength of less than 50 persons, in the case of Hungary, the figure was 0.1 per cent. In the sector of manufacturing industry in the same period, the average number of workers in individual enterprises in Hungary was 945, whereas in Austria it was 105, and in Belgium, Denmark and Switzerland it was around 50.¹⁷

One of the strong opinions in Hungary was that BEOs as organisations were 'clumsy'. Laky was quite emphatic in his assertion that strengthening of recentralisation over a period of time and *'overall spreading of interventions having the nature of direct instructions does not help to achieve socio-economic aims—ontrary to its assumed effects—but rather hinders it.* (emphasis in the original).¹⁸ A Polish economist after generalising from the experiences of WOGs in Poland has concluded that in spite of economies of scale enjoyed by BEOs, the innovatory capacity expected from such a scale was lacking almost everywhere.¹⁹ In the debate on optimal size of an enterprise for ensuring both macro and micro-economic efficiencies, an interesting point has been made by an author on the role of integrated enterprise. First, it has been argued that the tendency towards centralisation in free market economies, apart from rationalisation in economic structures also strengthens the property relations of these economies. In the absence of such integration, the existence of property relations in capitalism will be in jeopardy with the march of time. In socialism, on the other hand, all the undertakings (excepting in rare cases) have been already socialised. Therefore, even when these are not integrated there is no danger in their inherent property relationship.²⁰ Secondly, it is questioned whether the simultaneous existence of integrated and individual enterprises ensures a balance in the economy because in actuality, the bigger ones due to economies of scale (if these can be ensured) can cover up the bad ones in the calculation of macro-social efficiency.²¹

J. Bognar was very critical of the economic performances of large enterprises during 1972-1978. In his opinion, these enterprises in the name of correcting 'deficiencies of reform' brought greater inefficiency in the entire economy. He said,

It was under the pressure of the political power groups representing this opposed trend that individual favours, subsidies, wage rises not backed by performance granted to big industrial enterprises, investments, subsidies, disregarding the criteria of efficiency, delimitation of the useful activities of the profitable auxiliary (complimentary) workshops in agriculture, the introduction of a tax system putting a brake on small-scale production, exaggerated taxes on household-plot farming, etc., could all gain ground²²

He also tried to trace the causes of dismal performance of the Hungarian economy up to 1975 to the enterprise structure

The appointment of the Coordination Commission in 1980 was definitely the government's response to the critical situation. One important term of reference was to recommend the method of reorganisation of the enterprises. It should be noted that after studying the conditions of industrial enterprises directly under the ministries where 40 per cent of the total work force is employed, the Commission made the following recommendations

(i) *Disamalgamation of big enterprises*: In conformity with this recommendation, 18 associations (trusts) were broken up and 119 new independent enterprises were formed in 1980-81. Special steps were taken to deal with associations or trusts. Out of 24 existing in 1979, 9 were liquidated. These were in the food industry sector in which the amalgamations were horizontal. In the sector of machine tools and other heavy industries some amalgamated enterprises were broken up into independent enterprises.

(ii) *Strengthening of the flexibility of the organisational structure of the enterprise*. Reduction of administrative tutelage on activities of enterprises, diversification of enterprise activities in allied fields, and freedom to enter into foreign trade were the recommendations in this regard.

(iii) *Formation or establishment of a multifaceted organisational form*. This recommendation was for setting up filial organisations of state enterprises for widening their activities. This would have also helped in the formation of independent economic organisations of optimal size.

(iv) *Formation of new types of small enterprises and introduction of entrepreneurship*. The various forms of small enterprises and the nature of entrepreneurship in Hungary that have been and are being encouraged after the Commission's recommendation could be described in brief as follows.

(a) Small enterprise. Its spheres of activity are usually service, trade, repairing, tourism, etc. The enterprise has to mobilise a part of its resources and the other part comes from either a bigger enterprise or banks or local councils or even a ministry. As far as the nature of management is concerned there is no appreciable difference between a large and a small enterprise. Both have to earn profits by doing business. Initially, after the passing of the Act in 1982, the tempo of

establishment of small enterprises was not that high but at present there is an awareness and initiative for swift development of such enterprises

(b) Contracts and agreements These do not by themselves constitute an enterprise because that is an organisation whereas these are activities. But, according to the provision of this clause in the 1982 Act, departments act as small enterprises. The Act has empowered state enterprises, marketing and consumer cooperatives to give contracts to any of its departments with not more than 15 persons in employment, on the basis of an agreement mainly in the service sector. A significant feature of the agreement is that it is finalised with an individual employed in a department who then utilises the manpower of the department for fulfilling the conditions of the agreement which is usually for 5 years or less. The person so chosen is usually technically qualified and becomes the leader or the *entrepreneur*. He/she has to take the necessary *risk* associated with profit making business activities

(c) Business units within small establishments This system enables sub-departments of small establishments like shop and service organisations to receive a general or a special sum from the enterprise and then conduct the business of the sub-departments with an eye towards profit. These sub-departments in all their transactions are treated as independent units although in actuality they are not. Accounting is maintained separately to ascertain performance. The management of the main enterprise has the power to intervene if the results are discouraging.

(d) Economic Working Partnership (EWP) in enterprises This is an interesting development in the organisational structure of micro-units. This association is empowered to operate only in the private sector. From the juridical point of view, an EWP is a voluntary association of private individuals with the purpose of pursuing economic activities in the sphere of service, small scale production, etc. The special feature of this organisation is that workers and pensioners of a particular enterprise can function in a partnership. But the partners must do their business outside the normal working hours of the enterprise. However, the partnership is not legally subordinate to the enterprise nor is it a sub-department. It is accountable to the local political and administrative authority. Also, the EWP is allowed to register itself as an independent economic unit, if and only if, the director of the enterprise from which the workers and pensioners form the partnership, gives consent. This is necessary because the enterprise underwrites all agreements made by the EWP. In spite of the relative independence of the partnership, in certain situations there can be directives from the enterprise to the EWP regarding the range of activities or obligatory cooperation for fulfilling certain tasks in the field of services mainly for the benefit of the former. However, this power of the enterprise is an exception rather than a rule. Even if the

partnership has to serve the enterprise in a manner pointed out above, it has full freedom to come into an agreement with the enterprise on all matters, including the mode and terms of payment for utilisation of raw and other materials and labour used in overtime work

According to Hungarian planners, in this form of cooperation, the enterprise can utilise additional labour power better in a period of acute necessity for fulfilling time-bound tasks. At the same time it does not overstep the power of regulating overtime work and making payments from the wage fund. On the side of the workers, this method enables them to obtain an additional income through legal means by additional labour in their own professions. Within a very short period of time, this form of organisation has sprung up in various sectors like industry, construction, transport and even in health, especially in the repair and maintenance of medical equipments. The minimum and maximum number of partners in EWP are 2 and 30 respectively.

It may be noted that an EWP associated with an enterprise is of a special type. In general the EWPs may acquire rights and obligations under its own name as per provisions of Act no. 15 of 1981. In a typical EWP, the liabilities of each partner jointly and severally is unlimited. In this respect, EWPs differ from small cooperatives.²³ An independent EWP can have a full-time working force consisting of its members. Also, a member or a partner is entitled to be a member of several working pools. The EWP may have salaried employees, the number of which depends on the number of partners. For example, with 2-5 partners, it is entitled to employ 2 employees; if the number of partners is 20, it can employ 10, so that the total number of partners and employees do not exceed the permissible maximum of 30. Hungarian laws do not allow a one-man enterprise the right to employ persons. That is why, the minimum number of partners in an EWP has to be 2.²⁴

The structure of organisations in production cannot be exhausted without a brief mention of a few features of small cooperatives.

(i) Small cooperatives. The members are persons who have chosen the cooperative as the main place of their work. In some cases, there are members who are engaged elsewhere but work in a cooperative in their free time. Even students and pensioners are allowed to work but there are limits as to how many hours the last two categories are allowed to participate in activities of the cooperative. The membership is restricted to not less than 15 and not more than 100 members.

These cooperatives are allowed to take up the same line of business as the bigger cooperatives with two important exceptions: agricultural production and profit making in cultural activities. For the formation of small cooperatives, the initial funds are supplied by the members either in cash or in kind. The contributions could be both compulsory and voluntary. In the case of the latter the members receive an interest at 9 per cent per annum. The small cooperatives are completely autonomous as far as management is concerned. The principle of self-management in these cooperatives is that its members show great

interest in the increase of gross income which is distributed during the year in addition to the statutory minimum wage. If there is a loss, the payments received in anticipation of profit have to be paid back. In spite of the popularity of small cooperatives in various sectors, for quite some time there has been resistance from the government and bureaucracy which has made further development difficult. The party leadership however became aware of this resistance in due course and in the middle of 1987 it was decided that obstacles to swifter growth of small cooperatives should be removed.

(ii) Sectoral cooperative groups: This new form of cooperation emerged as a consequence of very successful results of agricultural cooperative groups. As far as its essential characteristics are concerned, there is close similarity between this organisation and small cooperatives: (a) Both can engage themselves in the same set of activities in industries, construction and service, (b) both have similar systems of internal management; (c) both are interested in maximisation of gross incomes and (d) the rules for setting them up are similar. But there is a *significant* difference. A cooperative group is *not a separate juridical entity*. This group has to work within the framework of another cooperative. The agreements made by the group are in the name of the cooperative which ensures its fulfilment. The second difference lies in the status of the members of the group who are usually part-time workers. As is known to many, the typical success story of cooperative groups is associated with the industrial cooperative 'Trakis' in Budapest. It is a big scale cooperative with 600 members. There were a number of small and individual tasks which had to be performed. These were given to 10 groups with 75 members. The size of the tasks being smaller, the group made economical use of capital up to 10 million Forinths.

(iii) Intra-cooperative small business units. As has been mentioned while explaining the contracts and agreements given to departments for performing some tasks within a state enterprise, a similar practice exists within cooperatives as well.

In the light of the above it could be argued that the reform of the eighties, especially of the first half, in the organisational structure of micro-units did not create entrepreneurship in the strict sense of the term. Development of market mechanism and entrepreneurship are regarded as inseparable components in the framework of standard economics. *But in a socialist system as it is in existence in Hungary, the former can be reformed to make it more developed without the latter because of the specificities in the ownership of the means of production.*

REGULATORY MECHANISM

Since 1968 when NEM was introduced, 'regulators' were adapted to suit changing conditions. Regulators related to prices, exchange rates and interest rates vary more frequently whereas those related to taxation and incomes are altered less frequently, because these directly affect

the management of an enterprise. The Hungarian economy felt the need for a change in the regulatory process in the middle seventies because of economic difficulties. The thinking on further reform started in 1978 and decisions were finally taken in 1984. The basic assumption of the 1984 decision was that reforms of 1968 were successful and further improvements were needed. One of the basic premises of the 1984 reforms in the regulatory process is that it would *contribute towards exercising ownership rights* in state enterprises.

In the case of public services this right will be carried out 'by government agencies or by all local councils', in the case of enterprise activity related to the market the ownership right will be exercised by 'enterprise councils (in larger firms) or by the assembly of employees (in smaller firms)'.²⁵ It is quite obvious that *the meaning of 'ownership right' in the Hungarian context is not the same at all as it is in a market economy.*

With effect from January 1, 1985, 58 new or modified regulations came into force to provide a comprehensive framework of economic management. The breakdown of these regulators are as follows (1) There are 4 regulations for improving the competitiveness of economic relations of enterprises. At the same time the superiority of any enterprise at the expense of others was declared illegal. The government control is restricted to maintenance of legality and supervision of the market mechanism. However, the state control is wider for those enterprises which are directly under sectoral ministries. (2) There are 9 regulations regarding autonomy of state enterprises and cooperatives. They relate to decisions regarding volume of production and product-mix, capital management and utilisation of enterprise income. (3) There are 13 regulations relating to pricing and taxation. The effect on pricing has been pointed out later. As far as the regulation of tax system is concerned there have been two distinct modifications. First, the taxes on resources like capital, wage fund, investment have increased whereas the rate of profit tax has been reduced. Second, the importance of taxation in the production phase has been shifted to that of sales. So, the importance of turnover tax has increased.²⁶ (4) There are 14 regulations regarding income distribution within enterprises, investment, capital management, etc. These are basically aimed at giving more freedom to enterprises for production planning for development and for utilising their incomes. (5) There are 9 regulations related to industrial relations and earnings of working people in enterprises. The main purpose of this set of regulations is to reduce government tutelage and empower enterprises to decide on distribution of earnings. (6) There are 9 regulations regarding the relationship between state and enterprise finances and the role of the banking system. The main objective is to make enterprises as free as possible from dependence on central resources for investments.²⁷

Several regulators within the package plan of economic regulators introduced at the beginning of 1985 are of a transitory nature, i.e., these

have been modified recently after a comprehensive review of the economy and its control system. In the meeting of the Central Committee of HSWP held in July 1987 it was suggested that the mid-point of the seventh five year plan (1986-1990) would be best for introducing the new set. One could point out a number of reasons for the changes. First, there were too many regulators and a simplification was necessary; secondly, it was felt that a drastic change in the tax regulator was necessary because under different heads, almost 75-80 per cent of the profit of an enterprise used to be taken away as tax, thirdly, in spite of encouragement of *entrepreneurial activity*, the regulatory mechanism effective so far could not create an atmosphere free from authoritarianism, and finally, since 1982 there are criticisms from all walks of life that due to regulations, especially related to earnings, working people, for maintaining a better standard of living, have to work almost double the normal hours by joining EWP's, etc., which drains the energy of an average worker. Instead there should be regulations to create conditions for earning a decent income.²⁸

With regard to price regulators, there have been a number of modifications since 1968. The conceptual basis of price formation also underwent scrutiny and change. The general philosophy of price formation to the planners has been that prices should be *socially desirable*. With regard to the constituents of the price system, a distinction is made between producer prices, wholesale prices and consumer prices. The regulatory mechanism is aimed at controlling each system. During the period 1962 to 1979 there was a change from centrally administered prices to a 'mixed-pricing mechanism'. It was a planned price formation ensured by a selective pricing policy. It was argued by the planners that such prices were reflections of the combined effects of centralised state decisions and interaction of market forces on the one hand and socially necessary labour expenditure on the other.

The regulatory mechanism in this period (1968-1979) was aimed at coordinating the roles of fixed, maximum and free prices. But the main drawback in the regulation of prices of this period was its failure to respond to the direct influence of factors in the market in strategic spheres of production.²⁹

In 1980, there was a change in the price system. Its purpose was to reap the benefits of the 'competitive sphere' for firms in Hungary. The price formation regulation in the 'competitive sphere' was oriented towards making the domestic prices in line with that in the international market. In the so-called 'non-competitive sphere', the price formation was on 'cost plus profit' principle. Kornai has shown through empirical study that even after the 1980 price reforms, the intention of which was to 'stimulate enterprises to follow the signal' of international prices, the profitability position of enterprises in the competitive sphere did not show marked change. Rather, profitability showed a tendency to revert to the pre-1979 situation.³⁰ According to

him, 'Genuine competition in the market leads to a great inequality and differentiation of enterprise profitabilities. The 1980 price revision was aimed at attaining an overall similar effect, however that does not seem to have happened. . . According to a report of the Ministry of Finance, the coefficient of variation of profitability of 1,163 enterprises was 79.4 per cent in 1979 while in 1981 it was 79.6 per cent for 1,168 enterprises—that is, it practically did not change at all'.³¹ What is not very clear from Kornai's conclusion is whether he believes that the constraint of control over market is an important factor for this behaviour of profitability of enterprises. Also, in a condition of control, if the Hungarian enterprises are in a position to compete successfully in the international market of commodities without at the same time showing wide differences in profitability, should it be then inferred that the pricing system is not rational?

In the new mechanism of regulation which came into effect on January 1, 1985, more changes have been introduced in pricing in the 'competitive sphere'. Producer prices in certain spheres like materials and energy are now fixed on the basis of the import prices of these commodities after conversion at the official exchange rate. If the value of imports settled in Roubles is less than that in world market prices, the difference according to price regulator, is absorbed in the form of a 'differential production turnover tax'.³² In the present phase of reform, the main emphasis is to make the domestic prices as close to international prices as possible, at the same time to fulfil the criterion of profitability. In general terms, the main criticism still today is that prices are not genuinely market regulated.

In the agricultural branch, the price system has been designed to ensure maximisation of efficiency. This is the opinion of the planners. The purpose of such a system of prices was to establish a condition of generation of a stable and not a fluctuating rate of profit. As a result, the regulatory function in the agricultural price system is felt by the existence of five price types: (i) fixed, (ii) maximum, (iii) binding limit, (iv) contract and (v) market prices.³³

With the price structure in existence in agriculture, the role of market forces has not been given too dominant a role. This condition demands, according to many, further reform in the agricultural price system, so that, instead of having a high percentage of official prices in the system, there should be a shift towards free prices which correspond to world market prices of agricultural commodities. In early 1983, the ratio between official and free prices in agriculture in sales was 63.37%.³⁴ As far as the world market is concerned it is not the question of official-free price ratio that determines Hungary's performance in the world, as the following lines will indicate.

TRANQUIL AGRICULTURE POLICY

Hungary, for quite some time, has been a net exporter of agricultural commodities. In spite of the smallness of the country, 98 per cent of the

domestic food supply comes from domestic sources. It is claimed that 'over the past decades, the branch has contributed more than its share to the country's economic progress. The growth rate of agrarian production was at times well beyond that of the world average'³⁵ The seventh five year plan from 1986-1990 has put special emphasis on agriculture so that an intensive phase of production could well be established during this plan. Between 1960 and 1970 there has been an annual growth rate of 2.2 per cent and from 1970 it increased to 3 per cent at constant prices up to 1980. Even in the sixth plan period (1981-85), an annual growth rate of 2.1 per cent was achieved. But 1985 was a year of very poor crop yield. In fact, if we took account of the first four years of the sixth plan, i.e., 1981 to 1984, the average growth amounts to 3 per cent. In the seventh plan a much slower growth rate has been planned. According to a law pertaining to agriculture passed in 1985, 'In five years the production of agricultural products should increase by a total of 7 to 10 per cent as compared to the preceding five years'³⁶

The strategy of the seventh plan is, among other things, to modernise industry as an indispensable pre-condition for the development of the economy with agriculture playing the role of a complement. It is felt that in this strategy of development the exploration of export opportunities in convertible currency areas should be done by industry. On the other hand, export opportunities in the Rouble areas will increase through higher share of agricultural products in export. According to a Hungarian author, this policy is not due to the emergence of ecological or technical limits but because a 'tranquil' economic policy change is taking place following the realisation of certain economic factors.³⁷

There are a number of reasons for the need of 'tranquil' development of agriculture in Hungary and planning for export of agricultural commodities more in CMEA countries from the seventh plan. First, agricultural investments in Hungary have not been so much concerned with modernisation but rather with increase of output, a typical manifestation of the 'extensive' path of development. Secondly, a small part of investment in agriculture has been utilised for improvement of production infrastructure and in marketing. As a result, whether the farm is large or small there are difficulties in reaching the external market. According to one author, 'these difficulties are strikingly similar to those found in other sectors of the Hungarian national economy. The low efficiency of investments and of subsidised development has, however, certain causes, which are specifically agricultural'.³⁸ Finally, the problem of fair price of agricultural commodities in the international market has also affected the export policy of Hungary. *The free market price enthusiasts tend to forget that exporters of agricultural commodities are usually at the receiving end if they are not part of the force that controls the politico-economic spheres of the international price mechanism.*

THE SECOND ECONOMY

Perhaps the most discussed topic in the west about the socialist economies of Europe is the specificity of the 'second economy' there. A 'second economy' is not necessarily either a 'black market economy' or an 'illegal economy' in the strict sense of the term. Of course, the illegal activities for increasing personal income come under those of the second economy but the converse is not true. In Hungary, the influence of the second economy is quite substantial. One of the most common activities within this economy is to increase earnings outside the place of work (state or cooperative sector) as a member of a group or partnership. This is not an illegal activity. According to one study in the mid-seventies, 70 per cent of industrial and construction workers, 90 per cent of those engaged in land, 20-25 per cent of the intelligentsia and 40 per cent of the rentiers were engaged in one form or another of activity in the second economy. In 1979, according to one estimate, 75 per cent of all household incomes came from the informal-private sector.³⁹ As a consequence of this phenomenon, the enterprise demand for labour used to be higher than the labour market could satisfy. *However the figure of 75 per cent of all household income emanating from informal-private sector appears unreliable.* In another study, which appears more reliable to the present author, it has been estimated that 'a total time input corresponding to around one quarter of the work time basis in the first economy is used in the second economy' and 'net population incomes equivalent to at least one third of wage-type incomes in the first economy are probably generated from the sum of private activities . . . and about one fifth of the annual GNP can be attributed to them'.⁴⁰ This takes place through an informal legal channel. But the other heads of income in the second economy are 'tips' for services, 'gratitude money' to doctors, bribes, unlawful advantages enjoyed for income, misappropriation and misuse of materials from the first economy for utilisation in the second economy and others. If this is added to the legal second economy incomes, it becomes equal to the income generated from production and service activities in the first economy. Out of this income, 30 per cent goes to the channel of redistribution whereas 70 per cent does not.⁴¹

One of the important reasons for the prevalence of the second economy is the low wage level of Hungarian workers. Even in the non-productive spheres, like education, health, etc., the salary structure is not encouraging. As a result, even senior persons belonging to universities and health services have to increase their monthly incomes by being engaged in the second economy. One of the advantages of the 'second economy' was that the incomes earned from here were not taxable until recently because of absence of personal income tax. In many cases the monthly incomes of individuals are double the income that is earned from normal full-time work. Persons earning about 7,000 Forinths say, per month, earn an additional 7,000 Forinths by working abnormally long hours (12 to 14 hours a day) during weekends only as

members of EWP's or sectoral cooperative groups. These facilities however are not available to all workers and in all areas. There was a strong opinion for introducing personal income tax to offset this imbalance in the distribution of personal incomes. There was an important corollary reason as well. There was a demand from the enterprise level to cut down profit tax so that more funds were available for production development and more profit could be distributed as earnings. On September 18, 1987 the Hungarian Parliament passed a law on the strength of which individual incomes have become taxable.

An author has identified one of the critical maladies of the Hungarian economy as the second economy or the unplanned market. Because of these, the working hours for many have increased from 38 to over 70 hours per week. The frustration of the population because of this condition has been manifested by growing alcoholism and an increasing rate of suicide (43.5 for every 100,000 population) which is one of the highest in the world.⁴²

It is self-evident from the characteristics of the second economy that a reform is essential to remove the evil effects of such an economy. *This cannot be done just by broadening the market mechanism as 'conventional wisdom' suggests. What is needed is a better income structure which could even be planned if necessary.*

CONCLUSION

In the attempt to present *in brief*, the characteristics of the Hungarian economic model, the changes in the organisational structure of micro-organs mainly in the industrial branch, the nature of regulatory mechanism in the present time with its modifications since the early eighties, the logic of emphasis on entrepreneurship and limited private sector, the implications of 'tranquil' agricultural policy and the nature of the 'second economy', some of the basic problems of the Hungarian economy have been discussed to highlight the thrust of the 'new' reform. That is the main purpose of the paper. However, there are notable omissions, the envisaged new structure of foreign trade being one. The subject in itself is important enough for a full-sized paper.

The question that is being asked repeatedly today in Hungary about its performance in foreign trade is—in what way can a change in the direction be achieved so that the effort can contribute to minimising as much as possible the burden of the huge foreign debt with the west. As is well known, being a small country, Hungary's foreign trade intensity is high. Almost since the inception of NEM, up to the end of the sixth plan there was an appreciable increase of foreign trade turnover in Hungary. In fact it became 5 times between 1969 and 1984. Also, the total foreign trade (export plus import) accounted for 90 per cent of the GDP in 1975, which clearly points out the extent of the intensity of

foreign trade of the country. However, this figure came down to 76 per cent in 1982 and then went up again to 82 per cent in 1984.

It may be noted that since 1974, the terms of trade has been unfavourable to Hungary. Between 1970 and 1979, the terms were 25 per cent unfavourable to Hungary, which meant that the country had to increase exports 25 per cent more to pay for deterioration in the terms of trade. There was a deterioration in the terms of trade with the CMEA countries as well. This was due to a new price policy introduced for intra-CMEA trade. Improvement of the position of trading with developing countries (especially NICS) has not been possible because of competition with the west from the middle seventies when a prolonged recession started in western capitalism.

The dilemma that Hungary is facing today in improving its foreign trade results has to be understood from two angles. First, trade with the west is essential but this will entail greater sacrifice of the Hungarian economy because of unfavourable terms of trade. Secondly, from this experience an interesting conceptual proposition emerges, i.e., creditor countries, in spite of 'stagflation' for a long period, could enjoy better terms of trade. It is therefore profitable to become a lender country in the international credit market in a condition of 'stagflation'. Since almost the entire developed market economy of the world was engulfed in this economic malady in the late seventies and early eighties, the debtor countries could only come from the third world or the socialist bloc. Since most of the countries of the former are of uncertain economic potentiality, loans to socialist countries was a source of averting further crisis and generating substantial financial benefits to the developed west. The creditor countries of the west, in the circumstances, not only enjoyed favourable terms of trade but also benefited from a regular inflow of interest payments from the debtor socialist countries.

With the introduction of further liberalisation in the Hungarian economy in the offing as part of a continuous process, the need for which was felt even in the late seventies, it is expected that Hungary's economic relations with the west will become stronger. With the introduction of personal income tax and complete autonomy of foreign trade enterprises and many other enterprises having the freedom to enter into international market of commodities, further consolidation of what is known as 'market mechanism' will be achieved from this sphere. The reform mechanism is likely to solve the problems emerging from the domestic price-international price dichotomy and low quality of products. One of the main purposes of the present day reform is to consolidate the intensive path of development, so that foreign trade intensity in terms of exports of Hungary rises among other things. Even then a distinction has to be made between 'reform for efficiency' and 'efficiency for sacrifice'. To be a borrower country does not necessarily entail that it has to receive an unfavourable term of trade from the lender nation/s.

Therefore, the problem of huge foreign debt for which Hungary is criticised inside and outside has to be understood in the context of distortions in the foreign trade market of the developed west due to stagflation. But this itself does not free Hungary from all her liabilities due to bad management of the economy

A very important topic of debate today in Hungary is on the question—whether for the sake of efficiency, unemployment as a regular economic phenomenon could be accepted as inevitable. In the search for the most desirable reform, a cross-section of intellectuals there are arguing that the fact of 'hidden unemployment' in various branches cannot be denied in their country or in any other European CMEA country for that matter. As a result, the potential advancement in technology in these countries cannot be made practically possible in the sphere of production. The first requirement for achieving this is to correlate manpower requirement at different levels of technology and then set or keep free the residual population. This action would however destroy a very important principle of a socialist economy, that is, the right to work and the right to obtain it for everybody and non-admissibility of 'unemployment' as a phenomenon. The supporters of a policy of 'unemployment' in Hungary are arguing that since their economy is socialist, it is characterised by the existence of a comprehensive system of social security. Therefore, unemployment in such a system does not mean insecurity.

The upholders of the principle of full employment as an inalienable part of socialism are extremely disturbed by this development in socialist thinking in Hungary. They are condemning any argument in support of unemployment. The contention is that there are two fundamental building blocks of a socialist system: (a) socialisation of the means of production and (b) absence of unemployment. If the system is bereft of one, then the socialist content will be greatly weakened. In fact it is doubtful whether the system will preserve any socialist character at all for any length of time.

If the efficiency of the economy is the key objective for adopting certain policies which are non-socialist in character, then to avoid unemployment, efforts should be made to bring efficiency into the process of manpower management in the sphere of production, which is not beyond the means of economic planning. This would be a better solution than echoing, as it is being done by one group, the western voice in the demand for rationality because it cannot be denied that the capitalist system also needs comprehensive changes to bring stability into the world economy. These changes are such that when introduced, some of the essential features of capitalism will have to be abandoned.

An author has made a very interesting comment on what should be the thrust of the reform. He argues that political and economic reforms should go together, rather, the former should precede the latter and that Hungarian society requires an all-embracing national value consensus for all-sided social integration. Only then a proper judgement

could be made about what constitutes rationality in the given situation. He argues that planning through command and obligatory tasks could lead to an egalitarian level but at a lower level of performance of the economy (closer to Kornai's concept of 'vegetative economy'). At the same time, in an economy in which there is competition for efficiency and profit making, gross inequality in income and status, differences between successful and unsuccessful people are bound to emerge. This is one of the biggest contradictions of economic reform.⁴³

If today's social value consensus is any guide as far as Hungary is concerned or other European CMEA countries for that matter, the present author is of the opinion that these countries will uphold the socialist principles rather than submit to the prescriptions of the ideologies of free market economy. The latest set of measures of reform is not likely to include the element of unemployment as an unavoidable measure, but rather provision for shift from one sphere to another when necessity arises, as T. Zaslavskaya has suggested, within the framework of the present Soviet reform.

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VENKATESH ATHREYA*

Perestroika and the Third World: The Changing Status of the Concept of 'Neocolonialism'

I

Since April 1985, the Soviet Union has attracted considerable attention the world over for its ongoing process of 'perestroika' or restructuring and the accompanying phenomenon of 'glasnost' or openness. The processes signified by perestroika and glasnost are very complex, have specific historic origins and dynamics, and encompass economic, political and ideological aspects. A major part of the processes concern internal changes in Soviet Union. There are, however, significant aspects of perestroika which have important international implications.

It is not the purpose of this paper to go into all aspects of perestroika. Rather, this paper has the limited purpose of examining some of the implications of the 'new thinking' on international relations associated with perestroika specifically by looking at the changing status of the concept of 'neocolonialism' in Soviet literature, especially since the onset of perestroika.

Before proceeding further, we must note that in discussing the changing conceptualisations of neocolonialism in current Soviet writing, we will be drawing not only on official CPSU documents (to which the present writer has a rather limited access), but also on writings of Soviet academicians. In the current period of 'glasnost' such writings need not always represent the 'official' view. However, we consider this procedure to be justified since often in the current Soviet debate such academic writings have been used as trial balloons to promote certain types of understanding which subsequently find their way into official documents.

We proceed as follows. In the next section, we document the changes in the understanding of neocolonialism in Soviet literature in the recent period. We then attempt to examine the theoretical basis behind these shifts. Finally we offer a few concluding remarks.

II

'Neocolonialism', as a concept in contradistinction to colonialism,

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emerged essentially in the post-World War II period, with the massive decolonisation process leading to the political independence of a large number of countries in Asia and Africa, which had for long been under the direct colonial rule of various imperialist powers. The 1957 and 1960 documents of the international communist movement spelt out the then accepted concept of neocolonialism as a network of mechanisms for exploitation of the newly independent countries by imperialism.

As the process of decolonisation continued in the 1960s and 1970s, it was recognised that this implied—especially with the advances registered by the socialist camp—some change in the international correlation of forces in favour of the 'Third World' vis-à-vis imperialism. However, the documents of CPSU at its successive Congresses as also between them, and the writings of Soviet academicians retained the essence of the understanding of 'neocolonialism' spelt out in the accepted documents of the international communist movement. It is important to emphasise here that even though the CPSU leadership advanced, in the early sixties, its understanding of the new epoch which was at variance with the 1957 and 1960 documents, the political-economic literature put out from USSR continued to accept and in fact sought to document the reality of neocolonialism. For instance, a work published at the peak of detente in 1973, which contains a detailed and carefully documented exposition of the concept and methods of neocolonialism, defined neocolonialism as follows:

Neocolonialism is the colonial policy of the era of the general crisis of capitalism and the transition to socialism implemented by the imperialist powers in relation to the former and existing colonies by means of more subtle methods and manoeuvres so as to propagate and consolidate capitalism and impede the advance of the national-liberation movement, extract the largest possible profits and strengthen the economic, political, ideological and military-strategic footholds of imperialism.¹

This work also includes in its specification of the methods of neocolonialism the following new forms for the export of industrial and finance capital, 'aid' programmes, unfair trade practices, establishment of military bases and blocs, various types of intervention in the internal affairs of the developing countries, the fanning of armed conflicts and 'local' wars, and attempts to use international and regional organisations in the interests of neocolonialist policy.

This broad understanding of the structures and mechanisms of neocolonialism and of the reality of its presence in determining the content of economic and political relations between imperialism and ex-colonial and dependent countries continued to be reflected throughout the 1970s and early 1980s in various official documents and academic writings. Even as late as 1986, the understanding seemed to remain

essentially intact. The 27th Congress of the CPSU held in February-March 1986 which advanced a new formulation to the effect that '... (a) controversial but *interdependent and in many ways integral world* is taking shape' nevertheless recognised the continued existence of neocolonialism.

By political manoeuvring, blandishments and blackmail, military threats and intimidation, and all too often by direct interference in the internal affairs of the newly free countries, capitalism has in many ways managed to sustain the earlier relationships of economic dependence. On this basis, imperialism managed to create and run the most refined system of neocolonialist exploitation and to tighten its hold on a considerable number of newly free states.²

This document further asserted:

... with capitalism's contradictions growing sharper and its sphere of predominance shrinking, neocolonialism is becoming *an increasingly important source of means* that provide monopoly capital with the possibility for social manoeuvring, reducing social tensions in the leading bourgeois states, and for bribing some sections of the working people.³

In a book published in 1987, the content and methods of neocolonialism are explained and documented, on the basis of the understanding spelt out in the 27th CPSU Congress and in earlier documents, and in terms practically identical with those used in those documents.⁴ It is only with Gorbachev's very important report delivered on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the October revolution that signs of a shift in the soviet understanding of neocolonialism appear.⁵ A peculiar question is posed by Gorbachev: '... can the capitalist system do without neo-colonialism which is currently one of the factors essential to its survival? In other words, can this system function without the inequitable trade with the Third World which is fraught with unforeseeable consequences?'⁶ The manner of posing the question is itself significant. The second formulation of what is claimed to be the same question 'in other words' in fact seeks to reduce neocolonialism to 'inequitable trade'. The complex economic, political, military and ideological aspects of the phenomenon of neocolonialism are in the process reduced to a mere relation in the sphere of exchange. Secondly, the suggestion is very subtly made that it would be in the interest of the (capitalist) 'system' itself to 'function without inequitable trade' since the latter is 'fraught with unforeseeable consequences'. This argument is in fact elaborated in the same text.

Inequitable trade remains a fact that will eventually culminate in an explosion. It appears that Western leaders are beginning to understand that this outcome is a distinct possibility.⁷

Developing this approach of appealing to the good sense of 'Western leaders' Gorbachev argues that '... there will either be a disaster or a joint quest for a new economic order which takes into account the interests of all on an equal basis.'⁸

From a position of the socialist camp as an ally of the national liberation movements and developing countries in the struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism, we are now told of the need to take into account the needs of 'all', presumably imperialism included. Not surprisingly, we are told that 'the calls for severing the historically shaped world economic ties are dangerous'⁹

This is indeed a remarkable formulation. One need not be an advocate of autarchy to emphasise the need to fundamentally alter the highly inequitable 'historically shaped world economic ties'. But the logic of Gorbachev's formulation inevitably leads to a recognition of the 'legitimacy' of 'Western interests'.

I have explained on many occasions that we do not pursue goals inimical to Western interests. We know how important the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, other Third World regions and also South Africa are for American and West European economies, in particular as raw material sources. To cut these links is the last thing we want to do, and we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed mutual economic interests.¹⁰

It is evident that Gorbachev's formulations cited above represent a significant shift in both the understanding of and the approach to the problems of neocolonialism. However, subsequent Soviet writings have gone even further. For instance, Gorbachev had rhetorically raised the question of whether the capitalist system could survive without neocolonialism, which in his view, was '... currently one of the factors essential to its survival'. And he had expressed the view that objective laws would compel imperialism to abandon neocolonialism or else that there would be a global 'explosion'. But two Soviet academicians, writing in an influential Soviet journal in late 1988, argue that neocolonialism perhaps never existed and certainly does not exist today.

The scheme of neocolonialism and neocolonialist exploitation (according to which)... the interaction between the centre and the periphery of the world capitalist economy was strongly influenced, on the one hand, by the striving of Western monopolies to seize control of the raw materials sources and markets in the developing countries via international organisations or through 'imperialist aid' and, on the other, by the national-liberation forces fighting against imperialist dictate for economic independence... (is a) rather primitive conception... (It) has never been ideal and today... is totally divorced from reality.¹¹

While Gorbachev had referred to 'inequitable trade', and to its 'unforeseeable consequences' which could lead to an explosion, the academicians assure us that '... the concepts of non-equivalent exchange ... (are) ... quite primitive by international standards,'¹² and that, in international trade 'today, 'there is no non-equivalent exchange as a systematic and constant factor.'¹³

Similarly the authors counter the argument of exploitation through pumping out of interest and dividends by saying that this outflow is fully or partially offset by the inflow of aid (in which, curiously enough, they include private foreign investment) The authors also assure us that '... the West is truly worried over the socio-economic and political consequences of the situation for the developing countries themselves ...'¹⁴ Finally, we are told that not only can the capitalist system do without neocolonialism, but also that '... a new model of relations between the Third World countries and the West are emerging (... which ...) ... objectively facilitate the solution of the acute problem of backwardness,'¹⁵ and that, 'the fact is that the world economy has no more efficient alternative to tackling that problem'¹⁶ That the views expressed by the academicians are not to be dismissed as aberrations is evident from the lead article in the same issue of the Soviet journal where it is argued that 'Anti-imperialism' is a poor counsellor in matters related to improving the situation in the world as a whole, and in some of its parts De-ideologising international relations calls for the primacy of law which is the best constraint of aggressive designs ...'¹⁷

Not only has neocolonialism disappeared, auto-imperialism has also to disappear along with it The contrast with the new CPSU Programme adopted at the 27th Party Congress cannot be sharper This is what the Programme has to say on neocolonialism

Conducting a policy of neocolonialism, imperialism is seeking to reduce to nought the sovereignty won by the young states and to retain and even tighten control over them

Taking advantage of the economic and technological dependence of the newly free countries and their unequal status in the world capitalist economy imperialism mercilessly exploits them ... '¹⁸ .

Further,

The CPSU supports the just struggle waged by the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America against imperialism and the oppression of transnational monopolies, for the assertion of the sovereign right to be master of one's own resources, for a restructuring of international relations on an equal and democratic basis, for the establishment of a new international economic order, and for the deliverance from the burden of debt imposed by the imperialists¹⁹

III

The question that arises is how, within the short period from the 27th Congress in March 1986 to November 1987 (and thereafter) such a basic change in the understanding of neocolonialism and its relationship to imperialism took place. While it is hazardous to make any definitive statement in this regard, the following points seem worthy of consideration.

The basic factor behind the shift is the 'new thinking' associated with perestroika. The 1960 document of the conference of the Communist and Workers' Parties had declared its assessment of the content of the present epoch in the following words:

Our time whose content is the transition from capitalism to socialism initiated by the Great October Revolution, is a time of struggle between the two opposing social systems, a time of socialist revolutions and national liberation revolutions, a time of transition of more peoples to the socialist path, of the triumph of socialism and communism on a world scale.²⁰

Notwithstanding vacillations, and a lopsided emphasis on the possibilities of peaceful resolution of the world's major contradictions from time to time, beginning with the CPSU's 20th Party Congress, this understanding was not subsequently given up, at least in official documents. Even the 27th CPSU Congress had reiterated the four important contradictions of our epoch—the fundamental one between imperialism and socialism, the contradiction between imperialisms and the ex-colonial and dependent countries, that between rival imperialism and that between the working class and the capitalist class in all capitalist countries. It had also asserted 'the past period has amply confirmed that the general crisis of capitalism is growing keener'.²¹

But the new thinking associated with perestroika as spelt out by Gorbachev is sharply at variance with the concept of the new epoch as being characterised by the existence, and over time, intensification of the four contradictions noted above. The new political thinking views the present period rather differently.

The post-war period has witnessed an in-depth modification of the contradictions that used to determine the principal trends in the world's economy and politics.²²

The character of this modification is perceived to be one of muting the sharpness of contradictions in view of certain objective changes in the world. The central thesis underlying the new thinking is that the basic contradiction of the present epoch, namely that between imperialism and socialism, has been so completely modified as to both require and admit only a peaceful resolution of itself. The reasoning behind this is spelt out as follows:

From the standpoint of our day—with its mounting nuclear menace, heightening of other global problems, and progressing internationalisation of all the processes in the world, even more integral and interdependent for all its contradictions—we have sought a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between working class interests and those of humanity as a whole . . . This led us to the conclusion that common human values have a priority in our age, *this being the core of the new political thinking.*²³

The essence of the new thinking, then, counterposes 'common human values' to class interests. While Marxists have generally held that class interests govern and determine social relations, including international relations, the new thinking holds that common human values have priority over class interests. Not surprisingly, the new thinking considers ' . . . the moral values that have over the centuries been evolved by nations, and generalised and spelled out by humanity's great minds' to be ' . . . vitally important to contemporary international economic relations.'²⁴ From this, it is a short step to assume that by 2000 AD the world will be shaped, among other things, by ' . . . relations, with reason, knowledge, and moral principles, rather than selfish ambitions and prejudices, at long last motivating states in resolving numerous contradictions in the world and achieving a balance of interests '²⁵

Given its perception of the need and the inevitability of resolving the contradiction between imperialism and socialism through exclusively peaceful means, the new thinking naturally sees the relations between imperialism and developing countries also in a new, modified and 'peaceful' light. Further, since economic restructuring in USSR is perceived to require considerably increased economic co-operation with the advanced capitalist countries, and the import of technology as well as obtaining of credit to finance such imports, the Soviet perceptions regarding international economic relations and the global division of labour seem to have changed. These considerations seem to be behind a re-evaluation of the concept of neocolonialism and its relation to imperialism. In place of the emphasis on the inequitous and exploitative character of present-day international economic relations, especially as between the advanced capitalist countries and the Third World, there is the argument that it would be dangerous to sever this historically developed division of labour.

IV

It is our view that the position taken by some Soviet scholars to the effect that neocolonialism no longer exists, and that 'anti-imperialism' is a hindrance to understanding and solving today's international problems constitute logical extensions of the analysis of the present epoch provided by Gorbachev's presentation of the 'new thinking' under perestroika. While Gorbachev's own presentation is more

sophisticated (and, incidentally, somewhat contradictory and ambiguous), the essence of the argument is the same. It seems to us that the argument is less a reflection of present-day objective reality on a global scale, than an opportunist justification for perceived 'national interests' of USSR.²⁶ Restructuring in the USSR, as presently conceived, requires peace at any cost, especially peace and cooperation with the Western world. Both to achieve peace at any cost, and to enhance economic ties with the West, allegedly 'legitimate' Western interests have to be recognised. The embarrassing concept of neocolonialism has to be abandoned or at least tucked away in the footnotes. However, objective reality does not lend support to the thesis of disappearance of the phenomenon of neocolonialism and its arsenal of methods. There is evidence to show that the developing countries have been facing worsening terms of trade in the international economy. The debt crisis of the Third World continues to grow more severe, and the tribute to advanced capitalism by the Third World by way of interest mounts every year. The neocolonial structure of the international division of labour has not changed appreciably to support arguments to the effect that all colonial aspects have disappeared. It is clear, then, that the vanishing act of neocolonialism in writings of Soviet academics and publicists reflects wishful thinking rather than a sober assessment of contemporary reality.

One can certainly agree that peace is vital and our planet must be preserved. But one is compelled to add, with Gus Hall, that the world we preserve must be livable.²⁷ And that would require as a precondition the real and not the conceptual overthrow of neocolonialism. It would demand not a 'peaceful permanent settlement' between imperialism, socialism and the Third World under the euphemism of 'balancing of all interests' but the elimination of the imperialist system.

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Industrial Organisation in the GDR and Future Possibilities

Gorbachev's complete change of paradigm with respect to inter-state relations and the accompanying domestic reforms have aroused serious concern in many quarters. It is feared that the changes taking place may entail erosion of the socialist base in the Soviet economy. If such a trend should continue, it would have serious implications not only for the other socialist countries but for all progressive movements, which consider the socialist world as their natural ally.

The Soviet leadership, however, insists that the reforms aim towards 'more socialism'. The Soviet economy had stagnated during the Brezhnev era and rampant inefficiency and corruption in all spheres has led Soviet society to a crisis situation. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to restructure not only the planning and management system but also the political process in order to ensure the benefits of socialism to the Soviet citizens. Accepting the premise that the basic character of a socialist state is not to be compromised, it becomes necessary to investigate in detail the possibility that the given set of measures would enable a successful transition from an extensive to intensive path of development.

The particular management details in a socialist state, namely the extent of decentralised decision making and the use of economic and financial levers, depend on the specific historical situation of the economy. It is not necessary to have a uniform management model throughout the socialist world. Gorbachev himself has repeatedly insisted on the necessity and desirability of pluralism. Nevertheless, Eastern Europe watches Soviet developments with keen interest. Apart from the implications for the CMEA co-operation every country looks for solutions to its own management problems in the Soviet experiments.¹ The reactions of different countries vary widely. Hungary and Poland have welcomed the new trend enthusiastically as it conforms to their own framework—more economic in the case of Hungary and more political in the case of Poland. On the other hand

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Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania have been openly critical of the liberalisation programme. The GDR and Czechoslovakia have restrained their comments, although the reaction in Czechoslovakia is more favourable than that in GDR. The GDR leadership has welcomed the reforms so long as they are confined to the Soviet economy and are not generalised as a model for every socialist economy.

In order to understand the GDR leadership's reluctance to examine the relevance of the current Soviet model for their own economy, we must recapitulate GDR's experience with the New Economic System in the sixties and describe its present management model keeping in view its specific production structure and its relationship with the external world.

In 1963, GDR was the first economy to have embarked upon a programme of decentralisation. The basic document, the Principle for the New Economic System of Planning and Management of the National Economy (NES) was based on Liberman's model (1962). The main theme was that the central authority should concentrate on long-term planning, structural changes required in the economy and cooperation with other CMEA countries. The lower level authorities were to be given greater scope and independence regarding input allocation, output target determination and routine investment decisions.

The industrial organisation in GDR comprised of a three tier system. The central authority included the council of ministers, the state planning commission, industrial ministries and other central bodies. The intermediate level authority was represented by the VVBs (Vereinigung Volkseigener Betriebe), which have associations of nationalised enterprises belonging to a given branch. The lowest rung consisted of production units, i.e., the state enterprises, VEB (Volkseigener Betrieb). Under the New Economic System, the VVBs and VEBs were given a great deal of autonomy in routine decision making and a set of economic and financial levers were introduced to dovetail the enterprise level decisions with the central plans.

The NES reforms were, of course, extremely moderate compared to the current Soviet reforms but the general direction was the same. According to *Osnovnye Polozheniia*,² a document specifying the guiding principles and basic outline of Gorbachev's reforms, central annual production plans are to be abolished completely. Output and input mix, customers and suppliers, structure of wages and bonuses and magnitude of capital investment will be decided by the enterprises on their own. Material balancing at the central level is to be replaced by a system of wholesale trade. Apart from the prices of a few key industrial products, the bulk of the prices are to be determined through inter-enterprise trade. The principle of self financing implies that the ability of the enterprise to produce saleable output directly and unambiguously determines the funds available for wages, bonuses, and new capital projects. There are provisions for identifying insolvent

enterprises and for beginning bankruptcy procedures. The traditional avenues open to enterprise management to project jobs are formally precluded by the reforms. Self management implies that the top enterprise management is now to be periodically elected for a five year term, by a workers' conference in multi-candidate elections. Management would be required to work in close association with the workers' council in devising ways to improve enterprise performance. In addition, private and cooperative activities will be encouraged in the service sector, consumer goods sector and a few branches of industrial goods.

In the case of NES³ in GDR, the annual plans and material balancing were not abolished completely. However, the enterprises received a considerably reduced number of plan indicators which were also modified. Karen (1973a) has compared the details of plan indicators in the pre NES days (1963), middle of NES (1966) and towards the end (1969/70). Thus, instead of defining the complete assortment that an enterprise should produce, only output targets for important products were given. Average wage indicator was first removed and then the specification on the number of workers was also removed. Only wage fund indicator remained.

At the same time material balances to be handled by the central authority also reduced. The State Planning Commission and the National Economic Council were responsible for some 1200 balances in 1963, for 20 per cent of this number in 1966 and for under 12 per cent, in 1967. On the other hand the commodity balances, for which VVBs and VEBs were responsible, increased by nine times during this period (Karen, 1973a). The importance of inter-enterprise contract as an instrument for coordination increased vastly. The 1968 balancing decree made long-term inter-enterprise contract binding on the balancing organs, unless they contradicted the plan. If such contracts were otherwise over-ridden by the balancing organ, it was to indemnify the party. The set of economic and financial levers introduced, for indirectly steering the economy, included the following measures:

1. Gross commodity production was replaced by profitability as the main performance indicator. Although other indicators were not withdrawn completely, bonus fund was mainly dependent on net profits of the enterprise.

2. In order to avoid wasteful use of capital goods, a capital charge of 6 per cent was imposed. Wastage of capital goods rather than shortage of energy or raw material was the main source of preoccupation in the sixties.

3. According to the principle of autonomous fund-raising, the enterprise investments were to be financed from their own funds supplemented by credits.

The state control on enterprise behaviour was retained through (i) net profit levy, which gave preferential treatment to the branches to be developed faster, (ii) a judicious credit policy, and, most

importantly, (iii) an appropriate price structure. Unlike the proposed Soviet reforms and the Hungarian reforms, the prices were not left to the discretion of inter-enterprise negotiations or the markets, but were fixed by the central price board.

The pre-NES industrial goods price structure did not correctly reflect the costs involved. Mainly, the capital equipment was valued arbitrarily and similar capital goods had vastly varying prices. The first step was to revalue the capital equipment and revise the depreciation rate. Subsequently, major price reforms were undertaken over a period of three years, 1964–67. The basic principle for fixing the prices was a uniform mark-up on the average prime cost of the commodity. Later in 1969, there was a move to change the prices of industrial goods to fund related prices, i.e., the price of production; the mark-up in this case, instead, being proportional to the capital employed. Dynamic pricing was attempted in 1968, by setting up bounds on profitability. When profitability exceeded the ceiling, the price was brought down to reduce it to the lower bound.

The above set of measures were expected to result in a more efficient functioning of the economy.

(i) The capital related pricing, the capital charge and profitability as the main success indicator were together expected to ensure efficient use of capital assets by the enterprises. If the enterprise was producing commodity A, its price would be fixed according to the average prime cost together with a mark-up proportional to the average capital employed per unit production of A. On the other hand the capital charge paid by the enterprise would be proportional to the actual capital employed by it. Thus, if the capital employed per unit of production was less than the average, the enterprise would earn more profits. Similarly capital intensive goods became more expensive. If an enterprise used less capital intensive goods as compared to the branch average, its prime cost would be lower and it would earn extra profits.

(ii) Dynamic pricing rules and a certain provision for a surcharge on the improved products and a discount on the obsolete products was designed to encourage technological improvement, and, in particular, to produce internationally competitive exports.⁴

(iii) Besides, development of certain priority branches was to be ensured by making proper use of the provision for deduction of net profits and a judicious credit policy.

In the actual working of NES, a number of obstacles were encountered. One set of problems arose because of a certain lack of clarity in the NES design and the inability of the enterprise managers (as well as the ministries) to adjust to the new management frame. For instance, confusion arose because the decision-making authority of VVB and VEB were overlapping. Then the gross commodity production indicator was never completely removed, and enterprise managers were not trained to think in terms of profitability. These problems could be overcome with training and a more careful and precise formulation.

The other kind of problems were more basic because they reflected inherent constraints of the NES model, which tried to simulate a competitive market functioning within the framework of administered pricing.

Firstly administered price signals were incapable of instantaneous adjustments. In a complex and dynamic economy, production and demand conditions are continuously changing and the finite time lag involved in changing administered prices leads to many conflicting decisions. In any case continuously changing the administered price structure is not a feasible proposition. This introduces lack of flexibility, which has no solution.

A second very important constraining factor was the small size of the GDR economy and an extremely diversified production structure. For instance out of 38,000 machinery items classified at the world level, 31,000 are being manufactured in GDR with a population of barely 16 million. As a result in a given branch there were only a limited number of enterprises. The production structure in the GDR economy denies any possibility of putting competitive pressure on the enterprises. The average norms for the prime cost or the capital employed per unit of production are to be obtained from the enterprises themselves. If there is a single most important enterprise producing the majority share of the output, then whatever may be its performance, it becomes the norm.

The Hungarian and the Soviet model propose to solve the problem of price flexibility by allowing the price to be determined at the enterprise level through inter-enterprise negotiations. This may eliminate the administrative time lag in price adjustments, but the emergent price structure would by no means resemble a competitive price structure. As Patnaik (1989) has explained, given the condition of full employment of labour and resources, this would lead to monopoly pricing, inflation and regional and sectoral inequality in the economy. The classic case of Yugoslavia adequately substantiates the point.

It may be suggested that the lack of competitive pressure in the domestic economy can be remedied by active participation in the international division of labour. The domestic enterprises under competition from abroad (either from imports or from foreign enterprises set up in the country) would be compelled to improve their performance. In addition import of capital and technology from abroad can ensure a more efficient use of the domestic labour and infrastructure to produce internationally competitive exports.

A major aspect of the Soviet reforms is the substantial changes in the sphere of external economic relations. Not only are increased trade relations with the west desired, but the Soviet Union is also actively contemplating joining the IMF and GATT. Soviet enterprises are allowed to conduct direct export-import transactions without any special permission from the authorities. Apart from negotiating substantial loans from private banks in the west, private capital from abroad is invited to set up joint ventures in the Soviet territory. Earlier

it was required that the foreign capital share should not exceed 49 per cent of the total, and the head of the joint company should be a Soviet national. These conditions have now been withdrawn. The wages of the workers in the joint company will be decided by the trade union and the management without any interference from the central authority. Tax breaks and low customs duties have been offered to the manufacturer willing to put up factories in the Soviet far east.

The IMF and World Bank experts continue to recommend world-market competition and liberalisation as magic remedies for all ailments. Unfortunately, because of their long isolation from the capitalist world-markets, socialist economies themselves have a misplaced faith in the fairness and efficiency of world-market forces. In reality a competitive world-market is a myth. It is dominated by giant-size transnational corporations with global control over technology, resources and markets. For an average size enterprise in a socialist economy, it is extremely difficult to reach a level of efficiency on par with the TNCs, simply because of limited resources. Merely producing goods of international standard does not ensure markets for the product. Besides advertising and transnational brotherhood, a number of political and strategic considerations play an important part in determining the availability of markets. We in the Third World are well aware of the implications of incurring debts for import of technology and capital. Equally well known are the transfers of surplus involved in the operations of foreign enterprises. (Also see Patnaik, 1989).

During NES, there was no attempt to expose the domestic enterprises of GDR to the exigencies of the world market, although export competitiveness was one of the major objectives of NES, and export performance was included as one of the success indicators for the determination of bonuses. GDR's special arrangement with FRG is one reason why GDR has never been so keen to enter the world-market as Hungary. GDR exports are tariff-free in FRG.⁵

Apparently, in the initial few years of NES, the overall performance of the GDR economy in terms of NMP growth-rate improved. Whether or not NES was responsible for it, is difficult to assess. In fact, the growth-rate recovery came too soon, even before NES had got properly started. However, problems arose because the structural changes in the economy desired at the central level were not forthcoming. The enterprises' conception of their development often ran counter to that envisaged in the central plan. The economic leadership decided that it was not possible to check these divergences in the framework of indirect steering.

STRUCTURE DETERMINING PLANNING

A solution was found as follows. Certain product groups, processes and technologies were identified as structure-determining products and tasks. These were placed under the direct control of the central

planning authority. The structure-determining sector was to cover those products, which determined the technological frontiers of the economy and which could profitably be exported. It covered 50 to 80 per cent of all investments in chemical industry, electronics, electro-mechanics, instrumentation and machine tools (Karen, 1973). The output assortment, as well as requirements and investments in the structure-determining sector were directly planned and managed by the central authority. VVBs and VEBs were given instructions to cater first to the needs of the priority sector. In certain cases, enterprises supplying raw material or spare parts were merged together, with the producer of the final product, to form a 'combine'.

For the rest of the economy indirect controls constituting the system of economic levers were further developed and the decision-making scope of the VVBs and VEBs was extended.

Structure-determining planning brought forth imbalances in the economy. The neglect of the non-priority sector ultimately led to bottlenecks and shortages in the priority sector because of inter-industry linkages. In addition, the year 1969-70 faced a severe winter, which led to dislocation in a number of branches like power, transport, construction and agriculture. Plan targets for the year 1970 had to be lowered and this in turn affected the projections of the perspective plan 1970-75. GDR authorities interpreted the crisis as the failure of the decentralised management to function under emergency conditions, like adverse weather, or under the requirement of major structural changes in the economy.

It may be noted that this is quite in contradiction with the Soviet plan which aims, simultaneously, at major structural changes in the production pattern of the economy, as well as the implementation of decentralised planning and management methods.

The GDR authority, however, decided to revert to centralised planning and management methods. The decision-making scope of VVBs and VEBs was severely curtailed. In the system of plan indicators, the role of profit was reduced. The gross commodity production indicator was brought back as the main bonus-determining indicator. The price reforms were discontinued and a price freeze was effected.

Since then, the GDR economy has been classified as a centrally controlled command economy. Western experts on socialist economies have concentrated on Hungary, because of its preoccupation with markets and liberalisation, and Poland, because of its political upheavals. Nothing so drastic has occurred in GDR, which has maintained stability in the economic as well as political sphere.

It would be wrong to infer that no attempts have been made in GDR to improve planning and management methods. Devolution of decision-making authority in some form or the other will necessarily be required in a complex and developed economy. One of the most significant

developments in this respect has been the reorganisation of intermediate-level authority in the late 1970s

MODEL OF COMBINE MANAGEMENT

Till the late 1970s the intermediate-level authority in GDR was represented by the VVBs, which were associations of nationalised enterprises belonging to a given branch. The VVBs were faced with two kinds of management problems

(i) The enterprises grouped together under a VVB were insufficiently integrated so that the branch could not enjoy economies of scale with respect to production or scientific and technological developments

(ii) The decision-making authority of a VVB was confined to the functioning of the enterprises grouped under it. This gave rise to a growing number of branch-external coordination difficulties, especially in view of the increasing complexities of supply relationships

Under centralised control a given enterprise had to convey its input requirements to the VVB, which in turn communicated it to the central authority through the respective ministry. The input-producing enterprise received these specifications from its respective ministry and VVB, and then communicated its supply possibilities through the same circuitous route. The process involved unnecessary bureaucratic effort and time. On the other hand, direct coordination between the enterprises was tried experimentally during NES. It had resulted in insufficient control of the central authority over the choice of branches and technologies to be developed.

A solution to both the problems was sought in the reorganisation of intermediate level authority, which resulted in the VVBs being replaced by combines. The four basic characteristics of a combine were as follows (also see Melzer, 1981 and Boot, 1985).

1. Vertically integrated unit: A combine would group together enterprises not only horizontally but also vertically. Thus, along with enterprises belonging to the same branch, a combine would also include forward and backward linked enterprises belonging to branches quite different from that of the main enterprise.

Ideally speaking, every combine would contain units ranging from the producers of the raw materials to the manufacturers of highly specialised finished products. The mechanical engineering combine would have its own foundry, and a shoe-making combine would produce its own leather. This way one could get rid of the cumbersome circuitous coordination process. At the same time, more direct control over the development of various branches would be retained.

2. Management of the production unit: A combine would not represent a management separate from the enterprises, which was the case with VVBs. The management of the leading enterprise or the parent enterprise would be the management of the combine. Moreover, the enterprises grouped under a combine would form a more tightly-knit unit as compared to those in a VVB. The combine manager would have

a rather far-reaching authority over the functioning of its constituent enterprises. He could change the functions of an enterprise belonging to the combine, transfer machinery from one enterprise to another, set up a new enterprise, centralise research, investment, marketing and accounting. This would facilitate economies of scale in production and technological development.

3 Research and development facilities. Many obstacles in transferring scientific results into industrial use stemmed from the administrative and geographical separation between the research units and the production units. Centrally controlled research units were often criticised for doing work of insufficient relevance to production. To overcome this problem combines were designed to have their own research and development wings, responsible for the development of new and improved products as well as the rationalisation of production methods. Ideally, every combine should have the facility to design and produce new and improved machines, which may save labour or material or energy.

4 Inclusion of foreign trade enterprises. The foreign trade contracts in different branches are concluded by foreign trade enterprises belonging to the Ministry of Foreign Trade. The combines were supposed to incorporate the foreign trade enterprises of the respective branches. This would enable the combine to plan its imports and exports without getting involved with the bureaucratic network. However, the central control is retained by making the foreign trade enterprises doubly accountable to the combine and also to the Ministry of Foreign Trade.⁶

Thus, a combine would represent a self-sufficient sub-economy, which would be equipped with research and development facilities, could fulfil its requirements for raw material and other intermediate goods, and would be capable of marketing its products in the domestic and international markets.

The 1979 planning order and the 'law of combine' granted a very significant role to the combines in the process of plan formulation. The initial plan drafts by the combines could be made independently without receiving any definite plan indicators from the central authority. These draft plans would be coordinated with the national draft plans prepared by the central authority. The combine managers would actively participate in these coordination processes. In case of any divergence between the central plan and combine plan, it would be possible for the combine manager to ask for modifications in the central plan. If the combine plan was to be revised, then it was for the combine manager to propose the alternative. The combine plan could not be imposed by the central authority. Unlike NES where the increased autonomy of the VVBs and VEBs was reflected in the reduced number of plan indicators, the combine autonomy would be reflected in the fact that the combines actively participated in determining the magnitude of various plan indicators. In fact, according to Boot (1983) the combines

enjoy a far greater autonomy as compared to the VVBs during the NES period

It must be emphasised that the greater autonomy of combines means their greater involvement in the planning process. It does not imply lack of direct coordination at the central level and a greater role of the markets.

On the contrary, the model is designed so as to reduce the reliance on market instruments to the minimum.

1 Unlike the NES, where the increased autonomy of VVB was accompanied by an increased autonomy of VEB as well, in the case of combine management, the autonomy of the individual enterprise is severely curtailed. Thus, an industrial enterprise gets specific instructions in quantitative terms and has little opportunity to make use of market indicators.

2 In a combine, the input requirements of a group of enterprises would be fulfilled by the enterprises within the combine itself. There would be no need to coordinate with the rest of the economy for many of the input requirements and, therefore, no use of the markets.

3 Besides vertical integration, a combine is also a horizontally integrated unit. This introduces a large element of monopoly. In many branches there would be a single combine producing the goods. Lack of competition would reduce the meaningfulness of market instruments.

With combine formation the total number of commodity balances to be elaborated at the central level have reduced, because of a lesser need for inter branch coordination. However, since 1987, every combine has been linked with the computer network, in order to ensure that detailed information regarding the combine functioning is available at the central level.

The process of combine formation, which began in the late seventies, was formally complete by 1980–81. Since then there are 226 combines in the industry, of which 133 are centrally run, and the rest are controlled by regional authorities. Among the centrally run combines four ministries—electrical engineering and electronics, heavy engineering and construction, chemical industry and light industry—cover 50 per cent of the combines. Three other ministries—glass and ceramic, general mechanical engineering, agricultural machinery and vehicle building—are in charge of 25 per cent of the combines. On an average a combine employs 27,000 people.

It is difficult to assess the extent of vertical integration in combines because the production structure of combines is not published by GDR authorities. However, in general, the process of vertical integration is not yet complete. It has been realised only in a few branches, mainly chemical industry and metallurgy. In the light and consumer goods industry there is virtually no integration of the backward linked enterprises.

Regrouping, obviously, cannot be done at one stroke. Once regrouping is done, it is necessary to wait and allow that unit and the rest of the

units to adjust to the change. There are locational and accounting constraints. The process will necessarily involve a finite time period.

The other two requirements of a combine, namely the inclusion of research and development facilities and foreign trade enterprises, have been fulfilled in almost all the cases.

The autonomy granted to the combines also varies widely. Whereas certain combines in chemical industry, machine building and electronics enjoy a great deal of autonomy and participate actively in the national planning process, others in light industry still get detailed plan instructions from above.

Performance indicator and pricing. As the model of combine management minimises the role of the market in input allocation, it is natural that the emphasis on market indicators is relatively lessened. However, it must be remembered that the model only minimises the dependence on market—it does not and *cannot* eliminate it completely. Given the interdependencies in the economy, vertical integration in a combine can never be complete, even theoretically. Moreover, in certain branches, especially consumer-goods industry, it may be desirable not to integrate the small production units into one large unit. An appropriate price structure remains a necessity even in the combine management model. The performance criterion on the other hand consists of a set of indicators explicitly reflecting the desired objectives. There have been continuous attempts to improve the price structure and plan performance indicators since the late seventies (for details see Melzer, 1982).

Performance criteria. The main performance indicators, which determine the bonus fund, have been changing over the years in search of an optimal set. After NES, profit was replaced by 'gross commodity production' as the main plan indicator determining the bonus fund. During the seventies, there was an attempt to emphasise detailed cost planning and rationalisation measures. Indicators such as material and/or energy used per unit of production were introduced. However, gross commodity production was retained as one of the indicators. According to the experts, it has been a major hurdle in attaining cost efficiency and producing better quality goods. This indicator, has been dropped in the eighties. At present there are four main indicators, which determine the bonus, net production, net profit, exports and finished consumer goods.

Pricing policy. At the time of re-centralisation, in the early 1970s, prices were frozen. However, from 1975 onwards, there have been wide-scale price revisions, for the existing commodities, at regular intervals. Prices of raw material and energy were revised first in 1976. This was followed by subsequent price increases in the higher stages of production. The next round of price revision took place in the eighties. The authorities are keen to ensure that increasing costs of raw material and energy are properly reflected in the price structure. However, the prices of the consumer goods have been kept constant throughout. Price

adjustments have also been made for development of the priority branches. Thus, many a time the enterprises are not allowed to pass on increased input cost to the production price. This, then, involves an elaborate scheme of subsidies.

There has also been a search for finding an appropriate pricing principle for new and improved products. The price performance principle was introduced in 1976. The price of a product fixed according to this principle, takes into account the use-value parameters as well as the cost parameters. For various reasons the principle was abolished in the 1980s and cost-based pricing was re-introduced. In 1986, a new principle was announced, which again aimed at including use-value of the product while fixing the prices. Besides, provision is also made to allow flexibility in the product price.

Finally it must be mentioned that the model of combine management is still not perfect. It is being improved and extensive experimentation is going on. The GDR leadership, however, feels that the combines have great potential for improving allocative as well as innovative efficiency.

To conclude, after having experimented with market instruments in the 1960s, the GDR economy has reverted to direct quantitative planning, with detailed specific instructions. The reorganisation of intermediate level authority, by introducing new units, viz. combines, has been done to minimise branch-external coordination, and facilitate efficient and direct supply of material and technology inputs to the enterprises. In addition, it is hoped that the immense opportunities for information storage and processing, offered by the computer revolution, will make it possible to increase greatly the efficiency of direct quantitative planning and management.

The overall performance of the GDR economy is undoubtedly more satisfactory than that of any other economy in the socialist bloc. Comparative figures for the annual percentage changes in the Net Material Product of Hungary and GDR are given in Table 1. The comparison is made with Hungary, because Hungary has progressed furthest in the market-oriented economic reforms.

Table 1
Annual percentage changes in NMP

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
GDR	4.8	2.6	4.6	5.5	5.2	4.3	3.6
Hungary	2.5	2.6	0.3	2.5	-1.4	0.9	2.3

Technologically, GDR is the most advanced country in the CMEA group. It fails to lead only in the case of electrotechnology and electronics. With regard to machine building and chemical industry the GDR compares well with world standards. GDR's population, however, compares itself more with FRG than any other country. GDR's technological backwardness vis-à-vis FRG, and particularly its

inability to provide a comparable assortment of consumer goods, puts an unbeatable pressure on the leadership to increase efficiency. On the other hand, GDR's cultural and geographical closeness with FRG has also made GDR's leadership extremely wary of introducing measures which may result in any kind of political or economic instability. There exists no immediate crisis situation in the GDR to require major alteration in planning and management methods. In any case the viability of the Hungarian reforms or the proposed Soviet reforms is yet to be proved in unambiguous terms.

NOTES

- 1 The Soviet Union has shown a keen desire to enter the capitalist world market, which will naturally constrain its participation in CMEA division of labour
- 2 Osnovnye Polozheniya was passed by the Central Committee Plenum in June 1987. For details see Hewett (1988)
- 3 For a detailed description of NES and post-NES recentralisation see Leptin (1975), Leptin and Melzer (1978), Karen (1973 a, b)
- 4 On the state of technology in the GDR and various measures undertaken for attaining innovative efficiency see Bentley (1984)
- 5 The arrangement would come to an end in 1992, and the GDR will have to look for alternative export avenues
- 6 Incidentally Gorbachev's offer for greater autonomy to enterprises in dealing with the external economy-enterprises can retain a part of the export earnings, which can be directly used for import purposes

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Perestroika: Reflections on the Theory of Power

In his celebrated discussion of tragedy Aristotle develops what can be seen as a general theory of spectatorship. This theory can have important implications for thinking about our relation with history, especially about events with which we either relate deliberately, or have no choice but of relating. The events going on in the Soviet Union now bear both types of relations with us. We cannot help thinking about them as citizens of the world as some would put it rhetorically. But I am sure we relate to those events more intimately as citizens of the idea of socialism. We relate to them as Aristotelian spectators.

Tragedy creates a narrative community. By admitting the audience into its theatrical space the theatre recognises a moral community between the characters and the audience. The spectators have acknowledged this community by coming to the tragedy. The tragedy acknowledges this reciprocally by lowering its 'fourth wall' towards them. The spectacle the tragedy is is not for the whole world indifferently, but for those who share its moral order, and therefore can share in the suffering of its infringement. Others can see this only as political behaviour, not as moral action. The tragedy speaks to its audience therefore in a tone of sharing, of confidentiality. As we share our moral world with the Soviets, we are spectators of its recent history. Its fourth wall is lowered for us to enter, to share in its meanings, sufferings, triumphs and defeats. We acknowledge this by our interest, by seeing this as part of our common destiny, and they acknowledge this by extending the hospitality of explaining their history—what they are trying to do to their social form—to the rest of the communist movement. We form despite all differences a narrative community of the history of the socialist idea.

Yet Aristotle's theory draws an ineradicable line of division between characters and spectators which is equally important. Characters do of course have their plans, designs and their own knowledge of the world and its ways. They know often the fate towards which they are moving. But there is a difference between what the characters know and the spectators. There are some things

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which they enact but whose larger character they cannot know. That knowledge of the limits and possibilities of life, the philosophic nature of the human condition, is possible for the spectators alone. I suggest that we respect this distinction too. We do not see ourselves as vicarious participants in the Soviet struggle, we accept our more distant, modest role as spectators. We do not try to participate, and consequently do not simply advance arguments for and against this or that reform, though that is perfectly possible and necessary. We enjoy the advantage this spectatorship gives us and try to see what is happening to the socialist idea through these events. As spectators we reflect upon what these differences show socialism to be, how its historical possibilities are structured, how the writing of this last line alters the structure of the earlier story of communism—as I think it must.

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There seems to be some uneasiness in the title of the seminar: it is interesting to read its silences. It does not use the term *perestroika*, it does not mention politics, nor the Soviet Union specifically. If we concentrate on economic reforms then of course these silences are broadly justifiable. Other socialist societies have also attempted economic reforms. Economic reforms always have implicit political reasons and often significant political consequences. Just as other reforms have had these, so it can be argued would the present ones in the USSR.

But is this really what we are discussing or ought to discuss? Is it not true that what has made these reforms unprecedented is precisely their political character, and if so, should we not discuss them frontally, calling them by their real name? If this is correct, we should discuss precisely those three things that go unmentioned: *perestroika*, its possible political implications and consequences (which are different: its implications might be wonderful, its consequences disastrous) and what this signifies for the idea of socialism in the most general sense.

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The reforms can be analysed at three levels: the nature and possible strategies of economic restructuring, the varying political results, and finally, their large historical implications.

I am not qualified to comment on the economics of the reforms. It is likely that as reforms directed at raising the performance levels of the key sectors of the Soviet economy these would fail, at least in the short run. At the same time, there are instances of fairly successful economic reforms which have gone in the same direction, as notably in Hungary. But I suspect the central point of even the economic reforms in the USSR is not economic. The Soviet communists have developed such a strong convention of excluding the political from the language in which they talk about their own society, under the misguided pretence that

socialism ends all serious contradictions (which was also, it must be seen, the implication of Khrushchov's slogan of 'a state of the entire people') that they find it difficult to get out of it. They must therefore speak of the political under various disguises, and the most respectable disguise is of course the economic. I am not denying that there are serious economic difficulties which these reforms are directed towards solving. But I still wish to maintain obstinately that part of the economic is economic and part, perhaps a large part, political under a transparent code.

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What sort of political issues are involved? As a student of political theory I feel that it shows the undertheorisation of power in socialist society. Much of Marxist political theory directs its ingenuity towards an understanding of the problems of state and revolution under capitalism. Little, if any attention is paid to the formulation of potential problems of power under socialism and its solution. This is true generally of Marxism, except in the works of Lenin, to some extent and under pressure of circumstances, in the late Mao. In a way, these events reopen the most significant theoretical questions about the socialist state. This shows not the unprecedentedness of these questions (which have been asked before, without perestroika) but their seriousness, because they were not asked with sufficient clarity, they have not gone away, and will not be solved.

Inextricably linked to the question of Stalin is the first question: what is the historical and theoretical status of the state-society formation that emerged in the Soviet Union under Stalin and continued afterwards in a structurally unaltered form? Is it socialism's necessary form, or the contingent form it had to adopt because of internal inadequacies (because we must accept such internal inadequacies of party leadership, Soviet Union's lack of a long bourgeois democratic political experience, etc.) and deformations imposed upon it by continuous bourgeois invasion for about thirty years. (I see the aggression against the Soviet Union as a continuous process from 1917. It intermittently stopped, resumed, changed form or in intensity.) Several aspects of these deformities were due to the defensiveness and encirclement of socialist society. But it is quite another thing to say they were not deformities. Given the historical knowledge now available, it requires a peculiar perversity to suggest that these are ideals that the whole of humanity should try to emulate once they make their revolutions. To deny the truth of the reporting of the daily life under Stalin as reactionary stuff is a pitiful form of self-deception which gives away the case. Those who refuse to accept such evidence accept by implication that if true such facts are too damaging to be answered.

Was the social-state form contingent or necessary? By using this somewhat gawky phrasing I am trying to open up a distinction which

many Marxists would perhaps consider illegitimate. I am suggesting that although for some types of thinking the concept of a social formation includes a typical state form, in other occasions and other arguments, it is perhaps useful to distinguish the state form from the larger category of a social formation. After all it is generally accepted that the same mode of production/social formation is compatible with several state forms (as in capitalism), and we can use this idea to open up some problems about the relation between the state and societal form under socialism. Further, a single state form can itself be represented by several regime types.

It is possible to hypothesise therefore that while the social formation in the Soviet Union is socialist and should continue, the state form of the bureaucratic Stalinist state ought to change in the interest of socialism itself. It may even be that the political form of the Stalinist state has become a 'fetter' for the further development of the socialist society. (This argument is about the state form. I can see that some would argue for a constitutive relation between the state form and the social relations it presides over, encourages, allows to emerge and get entrenched. They would, then try to take their criticism towards a critique of the social formation itself. I do not sympathise with that line of reasoning.)

Whether the state form is contingent is of course the primary question. On how we answer this question depends how we would construct our ideal of socialism. If we see Stalin as necessary and Soviet political society today as the terminal (in more than one sense) form of socialism, then ironically we have to reject in effect an important part of the ideal Marx gave us. This point has to be seen clearly and argued relentlessly against those who suffer from an inexplicable fondness for the most indefensible part of our common past. (It is wrong to deny that as being our past; the moment one declares one's adherence to socialism one must enter into its historical guilt in an abstract way.) Thinking historically, or thinking rationally about history consists in disrupting easy and plausible generalisations, and resisting a certain homogenising kind of history writing. We might advance general historical arguments defending the Stalin era. But that does not stop us from rationally, analytically, disaggregating its elements and considering what was necessary and what contingent, what was something to be proud of from what was erroneous and alarming. Those who would like to defend Stalinism, it must be noticed, naturally favour a more homogeneous and integral reading of the epoch, which leads to the conclusion that if you accept socialism, you must accept Stalinism.

Marx gave us an ideal of a society which would be superior to capitalism in three respects: in productive terms, in distributive terms and in political terms. It is a picture of a society which is nonrepressive in the most literal sense. Its failure to be nonrepressive politically can be justified only historically, by giving specific, contingent,

historically grounded reasons. But not in principle. It simply cannot be argued that political repressiveness or absolutism is part of our utopia, without distorting Marx and Lenin's vision. That is why in their theories a thawing, dis-absolutisation of the revolutionary state, which they metaphorically called 'withering away' is so crucial. I read the metaphor of withering away as a powerful unforgettable statement of the logic of dis-absolutisation. This is an integral part of their theory, a reminder that for repressive structures under socialism there must be constantly fresh argument, a new empowering by circumstances, every single day has to be accounted for, and not taken for granted. So that their followers could not forget the great libertarian core of their dream. It is the Stalinists who imply that when they were talking of liberty or democracy they were being dishonest. On the contrary, Marx, I think, was being entirely serious when he said that proletarians could set up the dictatorship of the proletariat and win the battle for democracy.

So the Soviet Union of the twenties to the eighties can be justified not as an ideal society, but as a historically inadequate form of the socialist ideal. It follows that if those circumstances change socialism would move towards a fuller realisation of that ideal. The first that must be done is to destroy Stalinism's status as an ideal.

It could be said, against this line of reasoning, then why did we have Stalinism in the first place? Is not there a continuity between Lenin's state and Stalin's, and to descend from the genuinely terrifying to the ridiculous, to Brezhnev's? Why did not Lenin introduce, or try to, a parliamentary system with cabinet form and periodic elections and party turnovers? Lenin made and protected the revolution with the help of an absolute state which made total demands on the loyalty and obligation of Soviet citizens. Was *that* justified? If that was justified, why not Stalin's rule? If the establishment of a particular state form is justified, what is wrong with its continuation?

This is a typical ahistorical argument (like the ones used by bourgeois social theory) which Stalinists would normally advance. Of course, there is nothing wrong with the establishment of a repressive state. Of course, there is everything wrong with its continuation, at least its indefinite continuation, in which the corruption of Brezhnev's son-in-law has to be justified by reference to the march of history on earth. Justification of the Lenin regime has to be done by an argument of the following form. I think it is possible here to invoke a parallel from the history of the capitalist social form. Revolutions cannot be arranged by consultative processes or peaceful ballots, Lenin's revolution had to be absolutist as much as Cromwell's or Robespierre's. A post-revolutionary state must be absolutist. But it follows that the directly post-revolutionary situation must change some time, and with its recognition there is a requirement of dismantling some of the extreme forms of concentration of power attendant on a revolution. To turn this argument around, when the objectively revolutionary

situation (i.e., when the survival of the radical form of society is still in some doubt) has passed away, but its rhetoric is continued, it tends to freeze into bureaucracy, and worse into surreptitious forms of bureaucratic privilege. It is deeply ironical if the members of the party of equality claim and unworriedly enjoy material privileges, however small. Since the objective for which such a concentration of power was created has actually disappeared other less defensible objectives pass themselves off under its disguise. Since absolutism is good for its lucky beneficiaries they would naturally continue with the rhetoric of siege, doom, calamities of all kinds, simply because the discourse of revolutionary absolutism gives them an incomparable political immunity and freedom from accountability. Something like this seems to have happened in the Soviet Union after the war.

To argue for a revolutionary absolutism is to see it as contingent, justifiable in only clearly specifiable circumstances. It is to argue against the absolute (i.e., independent of circumstances) absolutism of revolutionary power. After the situation eases, it must find some way of escaping from its own absolutism. In the arguments in the Soviet Union this larger question has been raised in the name of socialist legality and constitutionalism. This is a sign of maturity, not of retreat. Those bourgeois democrats who argued against absolute bourgeois power were not asking for a return to feudalism, but for a move forward into more advanced, finely constructed, sensitive form of power—a stable, post-absolutist bourgeois regime. It should be possible to make similar demands for regime reconstructions under socialism.

But is this not making peace with capitalism? This raises a further general question about how to judge the historical impact of Marx's social theory. I regard Marx's theory as being the most successful in history, so successful indeed that it has determined not only the growth of a socialist movement bearing a straightforward relation of origin and inspiration to his thought. It is written upon another side of history which we forget to look at. Marx's theoretical prognoses have radically and irreversibly altered the structure of capitalist society and its political discourse. This is not surprising, because all theories with such a structure of predictive generalisations give rise to two types of tendencies—both self-fulfilling and self-falsifying. Both are, remarkably, paying homage to the theory's truth, admission of the high likelihood, if situations do not change, of what it has predicted. The transformation of capitalism by social democracy is such an indirect but most significant consequence of Marx's theory.

Secondly, Marxism by its success has historically shifted the entire field of political discourse to the left. The fact that much modern liberal theory (e.g., Rawls) is fairly sensitive to questions of distributive justice (although they might not solve them to our liking) should be seen as a similar restructuring of the field of political discourses by Marxist theory. Some reduction of hostility with the capitalist order can itself be seen partly as a restructuring forced by

Marxism itself—the slow, complex, often contradictory but undoubted success of the forces of peace, equality, justice, the global transformation towards a more humane order of the world. In the long run, it is a process of pressurising a capitalism that is politico-economically reduced, discursively defensive and morally retreating.

In the argument presented here some might smell liberal ideas, which would in fact be quite right. In the light of perestroika and related developments it is necessary to reinvestigate our relation with liberalism. Though I think it will appear, on investigation, that some of the ideas that we abjure as liberal are not really so, at least not in the usual sense. The construct that we often use pejoratively—called liberalism—I suggest is a composite monster, putting together elements that are either historically discrete (i.e., in history they were not actually part of the same configuration) or historically distinguishable (i.e., although they have been contingently configured together in history, they need not necessarily do so). Liberalism can mean two things—(i) a political theory or position which must be rejected, but also (ii) a way of organising discourse which appears to be integrally connected to modernity. In scientific enquiry, artistic culture, social discussions, 'liberalism'—the existence or the active solicitation of different views so that the possibilities do not go unremarked—is essential. In fact, something like this is shamefacedly practised by socialist scientific institutions, and should be openly used in political organisations. Otherwise, we would live in an atmosphere of sociologically produced 'truths'.

If we try to see carefully what we oppose in bourgeois democracy and why, this might help in deciding what we should oppose or support in socialism. Democracy in principle (or as a whole) is not bourgeois—either in the sense of being conferred by the bourgeoisie on their people, or in being won by the struggles of the bourgeoisie. The general form of democracy today is a result won by proletarian and radical struggles to widen the narrow circle of political rights under liberal capitalism. It would be a great pity if democracy is not historically separable from the capitalist social form. In any case the Marxist criticism of bourgeois democracy is not that capitalism realises democracy and it is bad. Rather that what is bad about capitalism is that it does not realise democracy. As long as unequal classes exist, democracy must remain formal. This implies that only when classes disappear (under socialism) or nearly disappear, can the formal apparatuses of democracy enjoy real conditions of success. To oppose formal democratic reforms in socialist societies seems to me to be entirely unjustifiable.

My argument should not be seen as carrying a brief for those who support perestroika, but in a more general and abstract manner. Probably there are forces opposed to socialism in the Soviet Union who support it, and who believe, I think incredibly, that through this the process of socialist transformation can be rolled back. It seems a ridiculous idea that socialism can be improved economically by having

expensive private restaurants on the Arbat divesting wealthy American tourists of some of their excess wealth. It is dangerous not to emphasise that the industrialisation of the USSR was a most amazing achievement, and not to mention that its distributive superiority over capitalism is clear.

It is quite probable that the actual reforms of perestroika would not succeed. They might even, in the shorter run, create shortages, difficulties of all sorts. Some of its supporters argue that this is because these are being tried in the context of a generally antediluvian economic regime. But I wish to state one simple fact which strangely bothers dedicated Stalinists: if the Soviets are able to speak freely and express what they think, it is not a return to capitalism. It is simply a freer socialist society, which seems an excellent idea. We must see the socialist ideal as existing in history. A part of its existing in history is a necessity that it would be first realised in inadequate forms. The destiny of an ideal like Marx's is not to be simply realised, but to remain unrealised in constantly improving forms of socialist organisations, and to act as a principle which people can use to criticise the actual. It is the principle of 'self-movement' of socialism, to use an old-fashioned phrase. As we assert the historicity of everything, we cannot claim self-exemption. We cannot in effect say that all historical things are historical except the theory which says so. Those who have developed an ahistorical affiliation to the Soviet Union and declared in advance that it is a society of ideal perfection do of course face a logical problem: how to improve a perfect society. But they should not blame the Soviet Union, only their somewhat premature declaration.

Even if perestroika fails for now, its historical significance would still remain. It has raised some basic problems of power under socialism with unprecedented sharpness and insistence, and the process of this questioning is I suspect irreversible. We Marxists sometimes work with an excessively rationalist and economic view of the social world, and our knowledge and control of its causalities. But no revolution is able to completely control its own course or consequences. It is not considered disreputable not to have control over the intractable forces and contours of history. The law of unintended consequences applies to Marxism as well, and there is nothing embarrassing in admitting this. Yet, happily, we retain a less stringent and more tragic form of control over the historical process. We are not able to push history to take the exact road we wanted, but we are able to push it in that general direction. Marxists may not have been able to improve the world in exactly the way they thought, but still undeniably they have been in enough control of events to have improved an unreasonable world. We should wish perestroika similar, if slightly ironical, success.

I think perestroika allows us to think of our own situation in a less ideologically anxious fashion. By giving the ideal of Marx and Lenin back to us in all its complexity it reduces our dependence on the narrative of Soviet history. By emphasising its contingency, we can see

it as one story of socialism among many, and not as a compulsory script through which all revolutionary dramas must pass. It rules out the idea of re-enactment both because it is historically unfeasible and morally impoverishing. Accepting socialism does not imply repeating other histories or others' mistakes. But principally, it should help us get over a certain defensiveness about the use of democratic institutions. It is not a good idea to have to participate in a continuous stream of elections from parliament down to municipalities, and believe that this is a sort of crime. It is not a good idea to have to work out strategies in a generally electoral democratic form and have a theory resounding with the cannonade of the Bolshevik revolution. We should accept our history which is not to re-enact a Russian or a Chinese revolution, but to create an Indian one. Indian parties should not have a bad conscience about participating in bourgeois democratic politics and working for reform, but work out a theory by which such things can be historically related to the course of a larger transformation of the social order.

Spectators learn from characters. They can see what the characters cannot. But the spectators are themselves actors on a different stage. They cannot reenact the stories or lives of the characters they have seen on the stage. There must be other things which we as actors cannot see. We would enact tragedies of our own.

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*The Politics of Perestroika: Comments on
Kaviraj's Paper*

It is difficult to comment on Kaviraj's paper because it is short, suggestive, polemical and contains many points which, within the acknowledged limits of the paper, remain unsubstantiated. It is addressed to all those who profess to be actors on the Soviet stage, the unfolding drama of which they interpret wholly economistically. The paper urges them not to assume the role of 'vicarious participants' and argues further that perestroika needs to be seen in political rather than in pure economic terms. I do not know how many persons in this audience belong to this group. I suspect many have already forsaken the sentimentalism and orthodoxy of the vision that generates such attitudes. But it is difficult to deny that most of us, at least some time, have assumed this posture and viewed the world in this manner, that these have shaped our political identity and coloured our political judgement. At any rate, even if it is not addressed to any real persons in the audience the addressee of this paper might be treated as an ideal-typical construct to help bring into focus some tendencies and prejudices of real people. Whatever the case, issues raised in the paper are alive and well worth serious consideration, we must ask ourselves if it is proper for us to assume the role of actors on the Soviet stage and to view perestroika in a lopsided, economistic manner.

On the first point Kaviraj's advice is unequivocal. We must refrain from making judgements that flow from the perspective of the actor. In this context, Kaviraj relies in effect on a familiar distinction between actors and observers. As participants in the developing course of events we possess a know-how of what is going on, an understanding of what we are doing. To this we can claim privileged access. Whether or not we have consciously formulated this knowledge, it is available to us only because we are actors on a stage that we have ourselves mounted, performing roles we have chosen or at least are aware of, enacting a script we have partly written ourselves. Alternatively, as observers, we silently witness social events which we may not even comprehend. In the latter, no interpretative judgement is even possible.

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because we lack the practical know-how upon which such judgements are built. Without the benefit of the actor's perspective, it would at best be presumptuous to judge their actions. It is obvious that it is socio-historically if not always physically impossible for people in India to be actors on the Soviet stage. To imagine that we are and then make judgements on the actions of Soviet actors shows just about as much profundity as a medium-sized cowpat. It belies an arrogance born out of sheer ignorance. There is then a good deal of sense in Kaviraj's advice that we in India who are sympathetic to the socialist cause should adopt the more modest role of spectators. But while there is good sense in this suggestion, it is, alas, not good enough, for between pure actors and pure observers lies a third category of what Kaviraj precisely calls vicarious participants. Now a vicarious participant obviously does not physically take part in the making of a social event but by adopting a participatory stance he hopes to grasp some practices the understanding of which is a precondition for a meaningful judgement on the relevant issue. This skill is an essential component of the methodology of any good social scientist, indeed of any one who wishes to make sense of the actions of another human being. But then a good social scientist must not merely understand but also judge. We, who cannot act on the Soviet stage must like social scientists first understand and then make meaningful judgements. We are neither actors nor pure spectators and in full knowledge that we are only vicariously participating in some social events, we must await the first conscious formulation of the practical experience of actors before rendering a considered judgement on their actions. We must not judge prematurely, but judge we must because our judgements are important for not only the future course of our events but also for those in the Soviet Union. Will not a more authentic discourse on the socialist idea develop only when Soviets adopt the role of vicarious spectators and non-Soviet socialists assume the role of vicarious participants? This I believe to be the real thrust, somewhat obscured by references to the Aristotelian theory of tragedy, of the opening paragraphs of Kaviraj's paper. I cannot recall if my use of the primary terms used here coincide exactly with his but I believe my statement of the issue to be a slightly more intelligible formulation of what we both have in mind.

My concurrence with Kaviraj on the second point is even stronger. Perestroika cannot be seen only as a set of economic reforms. Indeed, its primary significance lies in the political sphere. In essence, perestroika is coterminous with democratisation. Here two questions may be asked. First, what does this claim really mean? Second, is this democratisation socialist or rather a departure from the true principles of socialism? In fact, the second question can be further divided into two questions. First, is an authoritarian-bureaucratic state machinery necessary or contingent to socialism? Second, does democratisation involve a compromise with liberalism? Kaviraj raises all these questions. I shall take up each of these one by one.

What is the political significance of perestroika? Clearly, it involves a restructuring of the political sphere, a transformation of power relationships, more particularly in that domain where power is located in its purest and most concentrated form, namely the state. Perestroika aims to restructure the Soviet state. Its objective is to dismantle a political machinery which stands apart from and controls or represses the people. Power has hitherto resided in the hands of party officials, technocrats and bureaucrats and has often been used against the people. At the very least perestroika is an attempt at the partial restoration of this power to the people.

Notice that this still does not entail the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. If it satisfies the orthodox Marxist, he may well take note of this. But he must recall that in principle even the transitional socialist state is meant to be dictatorial only for the bourgeoisie not for the proletariat. It is a dictatorship of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie not against the proletariat itself. It protects and advances the interests of the proletariat and its institutions are such that no matter what, it can never, unless completely revamped, turn against the fundamental interests of the working people. But quite simply, democracy is one of the fundamental interests of the workers. A bourgeois democracy, it is often claimed, is democratic for the bourgeoisie but dictatorial for the working people, likewise, the proletarian state is constitutively democratic for the proletariat while being dictatorial for the bourgeoisie. Lenin was clear on this point. A proletarian state is one which has no standing army, no police which is opposed to the people, no officialdom placed above them. It has a people's army, it is one where the people are directly in control of the organs of state power. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a state which merely works for the people, it must also be worked by the people. Of course, the state must guard itself against a counter-revolution but a state which turns against its people has already gone over to the counter-revolutionaries.

Clearly, the state which came into existence a little after the October revolution was not a dictatorship of the proletariat. Whatever the explanation or justification for the Soviet state, we need to be clear that it was a state widely divergent from the original conception of Marx and Lenin. The institutional structure that came into existence was coercive towards the proletariat and was manned by bureaucrats who, masquerading as guardians of proletarian interests, had in reality over time developed interests of their own. The new reforms in the Soviet Union are against this institutional leviathan—which for want of a better word we might call the Stalinist state. It is a restoration of the state which Lenin envisaged in *State and Revolution*, a state in which the parliament would cease to be a mere talking shop and would become a working body, where officials would be elected not appointed, where no official would have privileges denied to the people, where institutions would be fully accountable, power would be decentralised

and civil rights would be guaranteed, and where the legislative and the executive would be completely separated. Lenin argued that the bureaucracy was not a technical but only a political imperative of the bourgeoisie and therefore could easily be dispensed with. Much the same argument applies to the bureaucracy within the present Soviet state. Perestroika is an attempt to put into practice these Leninist principles.

I think in answering the first, I have also partially answered a part of the second question. The Stalinist state cannot be an essential part of the socialist project. No one who has read Marx's critique of Hegel or Lenin's *State and Revolution* can doubt this. No one seriously engaged with the socialist project can have any truck with an authoritarian machinery. But was the Stalinist state even historically necessary? Those of us who have long rejected the naturalistic belief in the inevitability of historical events—and I count Kaviraj among such liberated souls—must take far more seriously this radical question. We must ask if the political ought in the first place to have been sacrificed to the economic. I believe the Stalinist State was historically necessary for the economic growth of Soviet society but am not so sure if it was all that crucial for its political well-being. We can justify the historical necessity of the Stalinist state only on the assumption that the political is subservient to the economic. If we question that assumption, as we must (even if to arrive eventually at the same conclusion), the issue of the historical necessity of the Stalinist state leaps once again to the eye with all the accompanying uncertainty. I am surprised that Kaviraj is satisfied with the conclusion that though not essential to the socialist project the Stalinist state was in some sense historically necessary. I would have thought that the question is more open-ended than at any time before and needs serious re-examination.

This brings me to the final question. Does perestroika make peace with liberalism? Do we need to reappraise, as Kaviraj suggests, the relationship between Marxism and liberalism? This is a vexed question, far too complicated to be tackled well in a short paper, leave alone in an even shorter comment. Kaviraj makes some astute remarks on the issue to which I cannot resist adding some of my own, but only after some very general observations on this whole question.

I am struck by how easily elements found in a religious discourse creep into our discussion of the relation between liberalism and Marxist socialism. Recall that in much religious discourse the world existing here and now is shown to possess problems, inadequacies and imperfections which are ironed out in another, completely transcendent world that does not exist here and now. Not only do these two worlds have nothing in common but they exist completely abstracted from each other. (In fact when depicted thus they are substantively defined in terms of the same set of features which possess a formal, negative relation to each other). Marxists often paint their utopia with the

same brush and in exactly the same strokes, the liberal world is full of imperfections which will be completely ironed out in the world that embodies the principles of Marxism. The two worlds have no truck with each other. It is as if the two exist in different dimensions of space and time and therefore could not even in principle affect each other or have much in common. This duplication of our world, this way of populating and separating the two worlds may serve palliative mythological functions but constitutes very poor sociology of knowledge and generates even poorer forms of political strategy. Kaviraj rightly points out that the two world-views have affected each other and that Marxism has redefined the field of liberal political discourse. It would be still better had he also spoken more incisively on how liberalism has continuously altered the course of Marxist political theorising. It appears but only just so that for him Marxism has won more strategic battles than liberalism. I would be delighted to agree with him but would hesitate just a wee bit before offering even the faintest suggestion that this is so. Fortunately, Kaviraj is well aware that the simple arithmetic involved in comparative assessments has no place in deeper interpretative issues. But since he knows this only too well, we expect him to show just what is common between the two perspectives. Perhaps it is true, as I am inclined sometimes to believe, that the two world-views fiercely oppose each other precisely because at a deeper level they share some common assumptions. And will this turn out to be all that surprising? Do we not after all have for comparison before us not the world-views of the Azande and the post-modernists but of two rival, western, modern *weltanschauungs*? Is there not an inevitability then about the two possessing some common features that are also significant?

Why in the first place, one might also ask, do we separate the two worlds? The Harvard philosopher of science, Hilary Putnam, recalling a conversation with Noam Chomsky, remarked that philosophers frequently create problems for themselves by converting perfectly reasonable continua into stubborn dichotomies. For example, it is possible to construct a rough sort of ranking within things, gradually marking out the subjective from the objective. However, the moment one is asked to look for an absolute point where subjectivity ceases and objectivity begins one gets caught in a vertiginous trap. There is a point here to ponder over. No doubt differences exist between the liberals and the Marxists but must we always seek a firm dividing line forever disconnecting features that may well sit easily side by side?

Another point worth a mention concerns what in fact is the first principle of holists and structuralists and it is always deeply puzzling to me why it is so frequently overlooked. Individual items in a discourse never come with stick-on, undetachable political labels. Rather, each of these features get their political tone and colour from their relationship to each other. If we individually examine elements of liberal and Marxist discourse we are likely to end up with a whimsical

conclusion on their precise nature. Is the defence of political rights liberal or Marxist? Is privacy always a liberal value? Is a rebellion against existing institutions liberal or Marxist?

With these remarks of caution on the question of the relationship between liberalism and Marxism, I come to the issue itself. In Marx's writings there are three distinct views on the relationship which any further consideration would do well to keep in mind. On the first view, there is no dispute between liberals and Marxists either over key political and social concepts or over the various conceptions to which they give rise. The difference between the two lies in their respective diagnoses of society and on the corresponding prescription each offers. Liberals, being sociologically naive and unable to see the historical nature of things, cannot fully implement their own principles. Marxists armed with the more scientific principles of historical materialism can more effectively put the same principles into practice. On this view then Marxism is only a fuller realisation of at least one version of liberalism. The second view claims that the difference goes somewhat deeper to the middle layer of alternative conceptions. Each of the two traditions works with the same core of concepts of rights, justice, freedom and equality but there exists a perpetual contest over their rival conceptions. For every element in the liberal universe there exists then a Marxist counterpart, a liberal conception is opposed by a socialist conception of rights, liberal justice is similarly challenged by socialist justice and so on. Finally, a third view states that differences go all the way down to the deepest recesses, to such an extent that Marxists and liberals inhabit different conceptual universes. Marxists, then, do not offer a different conception of rights and justice but reject these concepts themselves. Against one set of concepts, they propose a fundamentally different one. For example, the entire morality of *recht* is opposed by an alternative morality of emancipation. For such Marxists then, the term liberal is a term of abuse, one can dismiss just about anything merely by calling it liberal. I have gone over each of these positions not to propose another position or take sides on the available ones, but to highlight the complexity of the issues involved on this question. Frankly, I do not know where I stand at present, perhaps only because I have not thought the issue through but I would like to know who has.

There is however one issue on which I believe I have a more weighty opinion. I believe on this point the difference between liberals and socialists is fundamental. At the centre of liberalism stands a principle for which the self, conceived in the barest possible way, has priority over her purposes, its capacity of choice supersedes any particular way of good life that is chosen. This self is conceived not only in abstraction from any substantive considerations about life-plans but also in complete isolation from all other selves. This is the self as pure subjectivity, and subjectivity conceived as pure negativity. Any positive community of selves that emerges does so contingently, by a

freakish, chance concurrence of all present individuals. From this also follows a certain negativism in all forms of liberalism. This underlies its obsession with non-interference, with a private sphere or an inner enclave which needs utmost protection from all others. It is because of its commitment to this conception of self that liberalism, at heart, is suspicious of the community and indifferent to the form of state power. I think this also explains why it fails as a coherent and complete political ideology. It is flawed because it does not tell us how an authentic social life can be lived, what it is to be a member of an ongoing community, and finally what form of state power is best compatible with social living. To fill this lacuna, a more adequate political ideology tries to combine liberal principles sometimes with a theory that defends a Hobbesian state, sometimes with one which justifies a Lockean constitutional political form and often with a theory of modern representative governments. Since liberalism appears to be compatible with all these forms of state, it follows that democracy is not constitutive of its basic principles. Not for nothing do we use a portmanteau term called liberal-democratic.

While democracy is related to liberalism contingently, I believe it to be constitutively related to socialism. For socialism, individuals are intrinsically social beings in the sense that anything we value, including all the desirable features of individuals, presuppose a background of culture and community. Socialists believe that rather than left to chance this large background must as far as possible be subject to human decisions, shaped by human practice. The social or public sphere is believed by the socialist to be collectively produced and reproduced. We take decisions about it collectively and cannot, without leaving ourselves unfulfilled, opt or be forced out of it. We value our status as political beings, find intrinsic worth in it which cannot be reduced to any worth it may have for an individual purely qua an individual. For socialism, the public or political identity of a person is important because it concerns his or her constitutive features. Political man is constitutive of socialism in a way that it is not for liberalism. A democracy allows the fullest possible development of such a man, hence its necessary rather than contingent links with socialism. Liberalism values privacy and leaps over genuinely social and political practices. Socialism sees in this sheer ignorance, an act of bad faith, or a denial of a crucial dimension of man. Seen in this spirit, perestroika which seeks the restructuring of the political domain is a restoration of the political dimension of persons. If this is what underlies Kaviraj's claims, I cannot see how a socialist could disagree with him.

B DEBROY*

Fertility Trends and Population Policies and Programmes in Socialist Europe

This paper discusses fertility trends and population policies and programmes in socialist Europe. By socialist Europe we specifically mean Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the G.D.R., Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. Albania is not discussed since comprehensive data on Albanian population trends are not readily available. Immediately after World War II, socialist Europe's birth rates were still relatively high as compared to western Europe. In the subsequent period there has, however, been a continuous downward trend in fertility throughout the region. A complex set of factors is said to have been responsible for this decline in fertility.¹ Among the factors listed are the more active participation by women in economic activities, rural to urban migration and the attendant unfavourable age compositions in the villages, changes in nuptiality patterns and the postponement of marriage, improvements in incomes and living standards with the recognition that in an industrial society there is a lesser need for large families, and the changes in legislation relating to abortion. In view of these declines in fertility, pro-natalist programmes have been adopted almost throughout the region. These are some of the issues that are discussed in this paper.

THE DECLINE IN BIRTH RATES

The downward trend in fertility, after a brief increase in the immediate post-war period to compensate for factors connected with the war, is clear from the figures for crude birth rates.² In 1950, with the exception of the G.D.R., crude birth rates in the region were between 20 and 30 per thousand population. By 1980 the rates had fallen to between 15 and 20 per thousand population. In 1950 the crude birth rates were 25.2 in Bulgaria, 23.3 in Czechoslovakia, 16.9 in the G.D.R., 20.9 in Hungary, 30.7 in Poland, 26.2 in Romania and 30.2 in Yugoslavia. By 1980 the crude birth rates had declined to 14.5 in Bulgaria, 16.2 in Czechoslovakia, 14.6 in the G.D.R., 13.9 in Hungary, 19.5 in Poland, 18.0 in Romania and 17.0 in Yugoslavia. What is particularly remarkable about these declines is the short space of time over which they have taken place. The brief increases in the imme-

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mediate post-war period attained peaks in different years in the different countries.³ In Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia the post-war peaks were attained in 1946-47. The peaks in Romania, Hungary and Poland were attained a bit later, in 1949 in Romania, in 1951 in Poland and in 1954 in Hungary. In all the countries except Romania, these post-war peaks were well above the crude birth rates registered before the war.⁴ In Romania, despite the peak of 1949, the historical downward trend in crude birth rates that had begun before the war was not reversed. The crude birth rate in 1980 expressed as a percentage of the crude birth rate in 1950 was 57.5 per cent in Bulgaria, 69.5 per cent in Czechoslovakia, 86.4 per cent in the G.D.R., 66.5 per cent in Hungary, 63.5 per cent in Poland, 68.7 per cent in Romania and 56.3 per cent in Yugoslavia. In proportionate terms, the greatest declines since 1950 have thus been in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and the least in the G.D.R. The extent of inter-country differentials in crude birth rates across the region has also declined. Comparing across countries, the ratio of the lowest to the highest crude birth rate was 0.55 in 1950 and 0.71 in 1980.

There are considerable intra-country variations in crude birth rates. Apart from the obvious urban/rural differential, there are also inter-regional differences in crude birth rates. In Czechoslovakia, crude birth rates in relatively underdeveloped and Catholic Slovakia have been higher than crude birth rates in the relatively developed and Protestant Czech lands.⁵ With the industrialisation of Slovakia, this difference has however narrowed over time. In Yugoslavia, crude birth rates have declined very little in the less developed region of Kosovo and next highest crude birth rates are exhibited by the moderately developed regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. The lowest crude birth rates are in the more developed regions of Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia proper and Vojvodina.⁶ The onset of the period of demographic transition has thus varied across Yugoslavia's republics and autonomous provinces.

The crude birth rate is of course a very superficial indicator of fertility, since it is also influenced by changes in the age and sex composition of the population. More specifically, the crude birth rate can be split up into its three components of a general fertility rate, the proportion of women in the reproductive age-groups to the total female population, and the proportion of women in the total population.⁷ Changes in age-compositions have had two distinct effects on post-war crude birth rates.⁸ In the first place, especially in the G.D.R. and Poland, war losses distorted age compositions so that the size of the cohorts which reached reproductive age in the early and mid-sixties was greatly reduced. This had a clear negative effect on the crude birth rates. In the second place, larger cohorts born in the immediate post-war baby boom started to enter reproductive ages in the late sixties and early seventies. This had a clear positive effect on crude birth rates. A third factor, that of a general ageing of the population, came into play in the late seventies and early eighties. General fertility, as measured

by the annual number of live births divided by the number of women in the reproductive age-groups, has declined, although there have been some reversals of this trend.⁹ Specifically, there were such reversals in Bulgaria in the seventies, in Czechoslovakia in the mid-sixties and mid-seventies, in the G D R from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties and early eighties, in Hungary in the mid-fifties and seventies, in Poland in the mid-fifties, mid-sixties and the seventies, and in Romania in the seventies. It is only in Yugoslavia that such a reversal of the trend has not taken place. Since the general fertility level has fallen by less than the crude birth rate, changes in the age composition of women have clearly had a negative effect on the crude birth rates. The proportion of women in the total population has changed very little. The influence of this factor is in any case difficult to determine. It is by no means obvious that a high proportion of women in the total population is positively correlated with crude birth rates. It can convincingly be argued that a more balanced distribution of the sexes has a positive effect on nuptiality and thus on crude birth rates.¹⁰

Age-specific fertility rates show a more or less continuous decline for ages above 30 throughout the region.¹¹ With the exception of Romania, such a decline in age-specific fertility rates has also taken place in the 25-29 age-group. Apart from the instance of Poland, age-specific fertility rates have tended to increase in the 15-19 age-group. In general, age-specific fertility rates in the rural areas have been higher than age-specific fertility rates in the urban areas. In fact, there has been no marked reduction in the urban/rural differential in age-specific fertility rates. This substantiates the conclusion that reductions in the urban/rural differential in crude birth rates have come about primarily through unfavourable age compositions in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas.¹² Other derived measures of fertility also indicate the decline in fertility throughout the region. Around 1960 gross reproduction rates were 1.123 in Bulgaria, 1.159 in Czechoslovakia, 1.172 in the G D R., 0.975 in Hungary, 1.438 in Poland, 0.978 in Romania and 1.330 in Yugoslavia. Around 1980 the respective figures were 0.996, 1.155, 0.946, 0.937, 1.108, 1.239 and 1.034. Around 1960 net reproduction rates were 1.011 in Bulgaria, 1.119 in Czechoslovakia, 1.122 in the G D.R., 0.907 in Hungary, 1.339 in Poland, 0.906 in Romania and 1.090 in Yugoslavia. Around 1980 the respective figures were 0.963, 1.126, 0.927, 0.909, 1.073, 1.185 and 0.964. The falling of fertility rates to below replacement levels everywhere in the region, with the exception of Poland, played a major role in the initiation of the pro-natalist programmes.¹³ One notices a narrowing of the gap between the gross and the net reproduction rates over time, a reflection of the improved conditions of female mortality.

A large part of the fertility decline in socialist Europe has been due to a fall in births of parity 4 and higher orders.¹⁴ Throughout the region, the importance of births of fourth and higher orders has been declining. Births of third order have clearly declined in importance

only in Yugoslavia and it is only in Yugoslavia that there has been a clear increase in the importance of births of first order. Despite a reversal of the trend from 1975 to 1980, there has also been a marked fall in the proportion of births of third order in the G D R, and a corresponding marked increase in the importance of births of first order.

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE IN FERTILITY

One of the reasons cited for the decline in fertility has been changes in the incidence of marriage and increased age at marriage.¹⁵ Marriage propensities have however fluctuated rather than declined, and any such changes have often been age-compositional rather than behavioural in nature. It is therefore not at all clear that unfavourable trends in nuptiality have contributed in any significant way to the decline in fertility. Nuptiality trends however cover not only marriage propensities, but also age at marriage, divorce rates and remarriage rates. Although divorce rates have been increasing, there is no reason why increasing divorces *per se* should have negative effects on fertility. The effect on fertility also depends on the remarriage patterns extant. For example, an investigation in Hungary found that 60 per cent of divorced women marry again within one or two years of divorce and that the fertility of such women subsequently increased so that in effect there were no fertility differences between divorced and remarried women and married women who had never been divorced.¹⁶ The postponement of marriage and increased age at first marriage, as a result of the increasing employment of women and the spread of education, is however a different proposition altogether. Vital statistics, population censuses and micro-censuses do not shed much light on attitudes towards children and family building habits. But fertility surveys do provide such information and such fertility surveys have been carried out in Czechoslovakia in 1970, in Hungary in 1965-66, in Poland in 1972 and in Yugoslavia in 1970. The results of these surveys show a strong negative correlation between the woman's age at first marriage and fertility, although the extent of the correlation varies across countries and across marriage cohorts.¹⁷

A factor whose impact is difficult to assess is the spread of education. It directly increases the spread of birth control practices and the incidence of family planning. Withdrawal is the most common form of contraception in socialist Europe. A survey conducted in 1966 in Bulgaria found that 69 per cent of respondents used withdrawal; another survey conducted in 1976 found that 75 per cent of all respondents used some form of contraception and that 75 per cent of those using some form of contraception used withdrawal.¹⁸ Modern contraceptive practices are not widespread in Bulgaria and no mechanical contraceptives are indigenously manufactured. Condoms are imported from Czechoslovakia, contraceptive pills from the G D R and the trial of intra-uterine devices started as recently as 1969. A family planning research study undertaken in Czechoslovakia in 1956

found that 69 per cent of respondents used withdrawal and 20 per cent used condoms, by 1970 the importance of withdrawal decreased to 52 per cent and that of condoms was 19 per cent; 18 per cent of users used pills or intra-uterine devices¹⁹ In the late sixties and early seventies the Czech government actively propagated the use of contraceptive practices. By the time a survey was conducted in 1977, 95 per cent of respondents used some form of contraception, 15 per cent used the pill, 19 per cent used intra-uterine devices, 3 per cent used sterilisation, 14 per cent used condoms, 31 per cent used withdrawal, 7 per cent used the rhythm method and 11 per cent used some other form of contraception²⁰ Figures on contraceptive use are not readily available for the G.D.R. Oral contraceptives primarily consist of ovosiston which is manufactured in the G.D.R. and is dispensed free to women with five or more children. Intra-uterine devices are imported from Czechoslovakia and have been available since 1965. The pill was introduced in 1966. In 1971, 14 per cent of all women of reproductive age used the pill and the figure went up to 40 per cent in 1973. Another 5-6 per cent of women of reproductive age used intra-uterine devices in 1973²¹ The Hungarian government, as in the case of Czechoslovakia and the G.D.R., supported the spread of contraceptive practices in the late sixties and early seventies. Fertility surveys have been conducted in Hungary in 1958, 1966, 1974 and 1977. The figures show a rapid spread in contraceptive use in Hungary since 1958²² The percentage of respondents who were users increased from 58 per cent in 1958 to 73 per cent in 1977, 55 per cent of users in 1977 used the pill and 14 per cent used intra-uterine devices. The usage of withdrawal declined from 52 per cent in 1958 to 20 per cent in 1970 and that of the rhythm method declined from 7 per cent in 1958 to 4 per cent in 1977. The relative importance of condoms and diaphragms has also declined in Hungary. In Poland a Polish Association for Conscious Motherhood was set up to ensure the spread of contraceptive education, intra-uterine devices started to be made by Securitas in 1968 and an oral contraceptive (femigen) was available from 1969. The relative importance of modern methods of contraception has increased in Poland, while that of traditional methods of contraception has declined. A survey in 1977 found that 75 per cent of respondents used some form of contraception, 10 per cent of users used the pill, 2 per cent intra-uterine devices, 19 per cent condoms, 25 per cent withdrawal and 41 per cent the rhythm method²³ In Romania there are all sorts of restrictions on the sale and use of contraceptives. In 1965 a survey showed that only 4 per cent of women of reproductive ages used modern contraceptives, but another survey in 1978 found that 58 per cent of respondents used some form of contraception. 1 per cent of users used the pill, 6 per cent used condoms, 44 per cent used withdrawal and 41 per cent used the rhythm method²⁴ Fertility surveys in Yugoslavia in 1970 and 1976 show that users as a percentage of respondents has remained at around 58 per cent, in 1976 the pill was used by 9 per cent of users, 3 per cent used intra-uterine

devices, 4 per cent condoms, 65 per cent withdrawal and 8 per cent the rhythm method ²⁵

While education directly increases the incidence of family planning, indirectly it allows for a greater participation of women in socio-economic activities, creates aspirations for an improvement in living standards and increases mobility. All of these affect fertility adversely. There is a strong and negative correlation between family size and the education of the wife and/or husband ²⁶. But the relationship between education and fertility is complicated by distortions of the age structure, since the average age of women with secondary or higher education is higher than those with less than tementary or elementary education. Unless fertility data are standardised for age of women, the fertility differential in terms of education is thus likely to be overestimated. The negative correlation between education and fertility must therefore be subject to this qualification.²⁷ The trouble with postulating a straightforward correlation between education and fertility is that there is a positive correlation between education and income, and the correlation between income and fertility might conceivably give rise to a spurious correlation between education and fertility ²⁸

It is also difficult to establish a relationship between family income and fertility ²⁹. Because of the induction of married women into the labour force in socialist Europe, the distribution of individual incomes as determined by the income of the family head is a poor indicator of the standard of living of the family as a whole. Total family income would be a better indicator of the standard of living of the family. But since increased family incomes are often due to increasing employment of married women and since increasing employment and of married women has a negative effect on fertility, the correlation between family income and fertility would be partially influenced by the correlation between increasing female employment fertility. There is an added complication in that total family incomes are not merely the sum of wages and salaries of all earning members, but also include social benefits. Social benefits like family allowances are in turn a direct function of the number of children in the family. Any correlation between total family income and fertility is therefore likely to be spurious, as is bound to be a correlation between per capita family income and family size, thus implying that the increase in family incomes and fertility. Subject to all these qualifications, the data do indicate a negative correlation between family incomes and the attendant increase in the standard of living has contributed to a decline in fertility. Other data however indicate a positive correlation between family income and fertility at low levels of income, a negative correlation at intermediate levels of income and a positive correlation at high levels of income. This relationship was, for instance, found to be true in the Polish investigation conducted in and around Poznan.³⁰ This has naturally enough been regarded as a vindication of the

Smolinski hypothesis on the relationship between fertility and income³¹ This suggests that the relationship between fertility and income depends on the level of economic development At low levels of per capita income the relationship between fertility and income is positive At levels of per capita income which are above the subsistence level, the relationship perforce has to be negative since other commodities compete with children, and the consumption of these commodities, which reflect higher needs generated by higher incomes, is possible only if families are restricted Once these higher needs are satisfied at higher levels of per capita income, the relationship between fertility and income again turns out to be positive

As mentioned above, there is an obvious correlation between fertility and the increasing employment of women, especially since the absorption of women into the labour force included not only unmarried women but married ones as well The availability of nurseries, kindergartens and creches aided this process, as did the granting of family allowances But nurseries, kindergartens and creches continue to be inadequate Consequently, at low levels of income, the satisfaction of basic economic needs has meant that married women have had to take up jobs at the expense of giving up a child And when living standards have improved in socialist Europe, the opportunity cost of having a child has had to be weighed against the acquisition of consumer durables and other luxuries The comparison of fertility differences between working and non-working women is complicated by the fact that the age compositions of working and non-working women tend to be dissimilar³² Figures however do indicate a negative correlation between fertility and the employment of women³³ But correlation does not necessarily imply causation. While it can be argued that increasing employment of women affected desires and plans concerning the number of children, it can equally well be argued that the number of children determines a wife's decision to take up a job

The correlation of fertility to the employment of women is also related to socio-economic status Fertility might be lower in higher status groups and a higher percentage of women might be employed in higher status families Figures available do indicate fertility differences according to the socio-occupational status of the husband³⁴ The fertility of farmers and farm workers is higher than the fertility of those in non-agricultural occupations Outside agriculture, the fertility levels of manual workers are higher than those of non-manual workers To the extent that fertility is influenced by the socio-economic status, an inter-generation or intra-generation change in socio-economic status should have an effect on the number of children Between 1962 and 1964 social mobility surveys were carried out in Hungary.³⁵ The main mobility flows in this period were from the peasant stratum to the manual strata, with a subsidiary flow from the

peasant and manual strata to non-manual strata. These surveys show that the fertility of mobile couples entering a higher social stratum from a lower stratum with greater fertility, swiftly adapt themselves to the fertility levels prevalent in the new stratum. Social mobility has thus tended to have a depressant effect on fertility.

An effect similar to that of social mobility is that of rural to urban migration. Migration influences fertility both through altering the age and sex compositions of the rural and urban populations and through attitudes to family size, since the average parity of agricultural households is in general higher than that of non-agricultural households. The diminishing share of agriculture in total employment should therefore have contributed to reducing the average birth order. To this might be added the effect of the shift from individual agriculture to collectivised agriculture. A desirable family size is often related to the demand for labour within a peasant family, and with the transition from individual to collectivised agriculture, the influence of this factor should have diminished. Fertility differentials in terms of urban/rural residence are of course not identical to fertility differentials in terms of agricultural/non-agricultural occupations, since a large number of non-agricultural workers do reside in rural areas. But the two are related. The fertility of non-agricultural workers residing in rural areas is generally higher than that of non-agricultural workers residing in urban areas and there is a strong negative correlation between fertility and locality size.³⁶ These fertility differences are not mere reflections of socio-economic differences of fertility, granted that socio-economic differences can be associated with locality size. Data from Hungarian social mobility surveys conducted in the sixties show that the character of residence influences fertility independently of the social composition of the population in these particular settlements.³⁷

Another factor which has supposedly led to declines in fertility is the housing problem. The shortage of housing has tended to reduce family size and it is suggested that there is a positive correlation between the size of the housing that is available and the family size. With the exception of Poland, the empirical evidence for this assertion is no-existent.³⁸ One reason for this lack of statistical evidence might be that for a given level of income, there is also a negative correlation between family size and the size of the dwelling, and this offsets the expected positive correlation between the two variables. A straightforward comparison of the trends in the two variables is bound to be misleading, since housing conditions have improved throughout the region while fertility levels have fallen.³⁹ There is also the fact that total living space available to a family is often determined by family size so that the positive correlation between the two does not necessarily indicate the fertility inhibiting effect of the housing problem. Living area per head might be used to demonstrate the fertility inhibiting effect of the housing problem. The problem in this

case is that since living area per head is determined by average family size, any correlation that is found might be entirely spurious. It is however generally agreed that housing conditions have to be improved if further fertility declines are to be prevented and that the small size of existing housing prevents the expansion of families, just as the lack of housing leads to a postponement in the setting up of new families. It is an acknowledged fact that throughout socialist Europe young couples find it difficult to obtain adequate housing. Families with adequate housing or with relatively larger housing are therefore more likely to exhibit greater fertility than families without.⁴⁰

There are various other factors which might have influenced fertility in ways that are difficult to measure and quantify.⁴¹ The elimination of unemployment, the provision of free education and virtually free health services should have led to increased levels of fertility. On the other hand, the improvement in infant and child mortality could have influenced the number of births required for a desired family size and thus served to depress fertility. Values have changed throughout the region, as have religious attitudes. Particularly in the Catholic communities of the region, the weakening of religious attitudes and rigid attitudes towards family planning and contraception must have contributed to reduced levels of fertility.

THE ABORTION FACTOR

By far the most discussed factor held responsible for the decline in fertility has been the legalisation of abortion in socialist Europe. The Soviet Union had legalised abortions in 1920, but had revoked the law in 1936.⁴² Abortion was legalised again in the Soviet Union in December 1955 and the countries of socialist Europe quickly followed suit, with the exception of the G D R, where the time trend for legalising abortion was somewhat different than elsewhere in socialist Europe.⁴³ Bulgaria was the first country in socialist Europe to follow the trend set by the Soviet Union and the regulation of April 1956 stated that any woman could have an abortion on request, although attempts would be made to dissuade women from such terminations of pregnancy. In Czechoslovakia, induced abortion had been an offence since August 1950, but the broad liberalisation of December 1957 legalised abortion for medical and other special reasons. In Hungary abortions had been restricted between 1949 and 1952 to cases where they were justified on medical grounds. But since 1953 medical commissions have been entitled to authorise abortions on personal and social grounds and these provisions were codified in a law of June 1956, which permitted abortions on request. The Polish legislation of April 1956 incorporated a broad liberalisation in abortion policy, as did the Romanian one of September 1957, which was very liberal in that it granted abortions on request regardless of any medical or social indications. The Yugoslav liberalisation came a bit later, in February 1960. The G D R adopted a moderate liberalisation in its abortion

laws in 1947. The high rates of abortion thereafter led to a pro-natalist swing that lasted from 1950 to 1965. In September 1950 restrictions were placed on abortions, the 1947 repeal of earlier restrictions on contraception was revoked in the same year, and a new law for the protection of mother and child was enacted, not only on grounds of social justice, but also to push up the rate of growth of the population.

The relaxations in restrictions placed on abortions were based on the idea of voluntary parenthood, whereby the individual would be free to decide on the number of children. Accordingly, abortions were to be permitted on therapeutic, eugenic, ethical and social grounds. Allied to this was the desire to protect the life and health of women, since illegal abortions tended to jeopardise both. The decreasing number of deaths due to abortions does in fact show that the legalisation of abortions did serve to protect the life of women in so far as there was a substitution of legal abortions for illegal ones. But such a substitution did not always take place. For instance in the G D R, such a substitution was by no means evident after the liberalisation of 1947, since the number of legal and illegal abortions both continued to increase.⁴⁴ There was however a reduction in the number of deaths due to abortions. The threat to maternal health as a result of illegal abortions and the principle of voluntary parenthood, particularly for women, have thus been the major reasons behind the liberalisation of abortion laws.

There has been trade-off between these reasons and demographic considerations which have led to the reimposition of restrictions on abortions. Fertility declines and a rise in the number of registered abortions led to the imposition of moderate restrictions in Bulgaria in early 1968. Whereas abortion was earlier available on request, under the law of February 1968, women without children could not have recourse to abortion except on medical grounds. Unmarried women were entitled to abortions for social reasons like rape or incest, or if they were under 16 years of age. Women with three or more children, or those over 45 years of age, could have abortions on request.⁴⁵ The restrictions were gradually relaxed and from 1970, abortions were permitted to all unmarried women and women with one child at a flat fee which was as expensive as one month's supply of imported oral contraceptives.⁴⁶ In May 1972 and April 1973 there were further restrictions on the availability of abortions, but the 1972/73 restrictions were reversed in the moderate liberalisations of February 1974.⁴⁷ The Czech law of 1957 legalised abortions on medical and other special reasons. Depending on what other special reasons were permitted, the law was either restrictively or liberally interpreted. For instance, a restrictive interpretation was imposed in December 1962, but a liberalised interpretation in July 1966. After the July 1966 amendment, abortions were available to all unmarried women, women with three or more living children, women of advanced age and women with difficult family situations such as those involving the death or

disability of the husband. After the liberalisation, a larger number of abortions came to be due to other special reasons rather than to medical ones.⁴⁸ Moderate restrictions on abortions were imposed again in May 1973. A second abortion would not be permitted within a year of the first. And abortions for married women who did not have at least two living children would be permitted only in exceptional cases. As in the case of Bulgaria, the cost of abortions was low as compared to the cost of contraceptives. In the G.D.R., the restrictions on abortions imposed in September 1950 lasted till 1965. A more liberalised interpretation was introduced in March 1965 and from March 1972 abortions were granted on request, subject to the qualification that such abortions on request were to be confined to the first trimester. Beyond the first three months, pregnancies could be terminated only on medical grounds. The Hungarian-legislation of June 1956 granting abortions on request lasted till January 1974, when moderate restrictions were imposed. As in the case of the G.D.R., the restrictions in Hungary in 1974 were combined with a greater availability of contraceptives like infecundin and bisecurin and compulsory education in contraceptive techniques prior to marriage. The rationale for combining a restrictive policy on abortions with a greater availability of contraceptives was that the restrictions were meant to reduce the high abortion rate and were not meant to increase fertility as a primary objective.⁴⁹ The broad liberalisation in Poland in 1956 led to a further liberalisation in January 1960 and no restrictions on abortions have been imposed thereafter. In contrast to Poland, the Romanian abortion on request legislation of 1957 was circumscribed by broad restrictions on abortions imposed in October 1966.⁵⁰ And in contrast to Hungary and the G.D.R., restrictions on abortions in Romania were combined with restricted availability of contraception, since the Romanian intention, unlike the Hungarian one, was primarily to increase fertility. Under the 1966 decree, abortions were restricted to cases where the life of the mother was at stake, where the probability of congenital malformations was high, and where rape could be proved. Abortions would also be permitted if the woman was over 45 and had at least four living children, and in special cases where physiological or psychological conditions so warranted. As in the case of Poland, no restrictions on abortions have followed the period of liberalisation in Yugoslavia. The broad liberalisation of February 1960 was followed by further liberalisations in April 1969, and the Federal Constitution of February 1974 guaranteed the right to take free decisions on childbirth.⁵¹

The existing legislation on abortions thus dates from 1973/74 in Bulgaria, 1973 in Czechoslovakia, 1972 in the G.D.R., 1974 in Hungary, 1956/60 (with an amendment in 1969) in Poland, 1957/66 in Romania and 1974 in Yugoslavia.⁵² The existing legislation in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Romania does not touch upon the issue of whether abortion is to be available on request or not.⁵³ In Bulgaria abortion is available on request to women who have at least two living children, in the

G D R it is available on request irrespective of the number of living children, in Hungary it is available on request (subject to authorisation by special committees) to women who are single, divorced, separated from their husbands for at least six months, widows over 40 years of age or to women who have at least three living children. In Slovenia abortions are available on request up to the tenth week of pregnancy and termination of pregnancy beyond the tenth week is permitted only if there are special risks to the woman's life, health or future motherhood. Socio-economic grounds for termination of pregnancy are accepted in all the countries of the region, other than Romania. In Bulgaria such reasons include cases where the woman is unmarried, a widow, separated from her husband, or has one living child and is over 40 years of age. In Czechoslovakia they include cases where the woman is unmarried, a widow, the husband is in a poor state of health, the woman is over 40 years of age or has at least three living children. Poor levels of living associated with housing or financial conditions and the breakdown of the family as a unit are also accepted grounds for termination of pregnancy in Czechoslovakia. In Hungary acceptable socio-economic reasons cover social grounds of an imperative nature, in addition to cases where either parent has no available accommodation or has been serving a prison sentence for at least six months. Terminations are permitted in Poland if the woman faces difficult living conditions or is going to face difficult living conditions after the child is born.

Medical and eugenic considerations justify abortions in all seven countries. Eugenic considerations do not directly enter only in the case of Poland, where they are assumed to be covered under the clause of difficult living conditions. Except for Yugoslavia, legislation in all the countries permits abortion on juridical considerations. Rape is mentioned in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the G D R, Poland and Romania, incest in Romania, other forms of sexual misconduct in the G D R, and other criminal offences in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Reasons other than socio-economic, medical, eugenic or juridical are also mentioned in some of the legislation. The failure of intra-uterine conception is mentioned in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, conception before 15 or after 45 years of age in Czechoslovakia, conception after 45 years of age in Romania, conception by an alien in Bulgaria, conception by a woman who has at least two living children and has undergone an obstetric event in Hungary, and conception by a woman who has more than four children under her care in Romania. The Bulgarian legislation permits abortion on request within ten weeks, as does the Yugoslav legislation, although termination beyond the tenth week is permitted in Yugoslavia under special circumstances. In Czechoslovakia termination for medical reasons is permitted within twelve weeks and termination for eugenic reasons within twenty-four weeks. Abortions on request are allowed during the first three months in the G.D.R. In Hungary there is no time limit for abortions on medical

grounds, but for other reasons terminations have to take place within twelve weeks and within eight weeks if the woman is a minor. The first three months are the legal period allowed in Romania although abortions can take place up to the sixth month if the life of the woman is at stake.

In addition to the consent of the woman, the Hungarian legislation provides for a hearing of the husband by the special committee set up to authorise abortion. Authorisations and approvals by boards or committees are mandatory in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, they are mandatory in Bulgaria if the abortion is to be on medical grounds for a woman who does not have at least two living children. Such approvals are necessary in the G D R only if abortions are to take place beyond the first twelve weeks, and in Yugoslavia only if abortions are to take place beyond the first ten weeks. In Poland, a patient refused abortion by her physician can seek the permission of a medical board. All abortions have to take place in recognised hospitals, clinics and health care establishments. The woman is not responsible for violating legislation relating to abortion in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, but is criminally responsible in Romania and the G D R if abortion takes place after the first twelve weeks.

A causal relationship has been ascribed to the legalisation of abortion and the fertility decline and it is maintained that the fertility declines are far in excess of what could be explained by economic or social factors alone.⁵⁴ Figures are available on the incidence of legal abortion.⁵⁵ These are either legal abortion rates, defined as the number of legal abortions per thousand women aged 15 to 44, or legal abortion ratios, defined as the number of legal abortions per hundred live births. Legal abortions are defined to be those which are performed with authorisation, while other abortions include both spontaneous abortions and illegal abortions. Figures on illegal abortions can sometimes be obtained from cases of abortion treated in hospitals, that is, in cases where induced abortions were performed outside hospitals but the patient subsequently had to be hospitalised because of fever or other complications.⁵⁶

The interpretation of these figures is not all that simple. Not surprisingly, the incidence of legal abortions is correlated with the liberalisations or restrictions in force.⁵⁷ Liberalisations in Bulgaria in 1974, in Czechoslovakia in 1957, in Hungary in 1956, in Poland in 1956/60 and in Yugoslavia in 1960 were accompanied by a rise in the incidence of legal abortions. Correspondingly, restrictions in Bulgaria in 1968 and 1972/73, in Czechoslovakia in 1962 and 1973, and in Hungary in 1974 did bring about a fall in the incidence of legal abortions. But how has the legalization of abortions contributed to the decline in fertility? Once there are liberalisations, there are four distinct kinds of legal abortions that are performed.⁵⁸ (i) Legal abortions that would have taken place as illegal abortions had there been no liberalisation; (ii) Legal abortions performed for reasons

considered legal prior to the liberalisation, (iii) legal abortions undertaken to prevent births that would have taken place had there been no liberalisation, and (iv) legal abortions performed as a consequence of a relaxation in contraceptive practices following the availability of the option of legal abortion. Only the third of these is relevant as far as the decline in fertility is concerned. And the problem is that it is almost impossible to isolate the importance of these different factors.

For the reasons given above, the validity of the causal relationship between the legalisation of abortions and the ensuing fertility decline is difficult to establish. In the first place, a high incidence of legal abortions may to a certain extent be offset by a relatively lower incidence of illegal abortions. Secondly, the imposition of restrictions on abortions has often been coupled with various pro-natalist programmes and how is one to separate out the influences of the two? But a comparison does show some correlation between increases/decreases in fertility levels and restrictions/liberalisations in abortion policy. It is however noticeable that the fertility declines had set in well before the legalisation of abortions.

Attempts have been made to use the number of known pregnancies (abortions plus live births) as a surrogate measure of fertility.⁵⁹ There have also been comprehensive attempts to work out the fertility inhibiting effects of nuptiality, contraception, abortion and postpartum infecundability.⁶⁰ The figures available for Czechoslovakia, the G.D.R. and Hungary do show that a large percentage of legally induced abortions following liberalised abortion legislation was designed to prevent births.⁶¹ The figure was 75 per cent in 1958, 84 per cent in 1959 and 80 per cent in 1960 for Czechoslovakia, 64 per cent in 1972, 80 per cent in 1973 and 88 per cent in 1974 for the G.D.R., 36 per cent in 1956, 29 per cent in 1957 and 27 per cent in 1958 for Hungary. In Hungary, a large percentage of legally induced abortions following liberalised abortion consisted of abortions which had been illegal prior to the liberalisation. Comparable figures are not available for Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia, but the figures given above for Czechoslovakia, the G.D.R. and Hungary do indicate that the legalisation of abortion had fertility inhibiting effects. In addition to modifying fertility behaviour, the legalisation of abortion also modified contraceptive behaviour, particularly in Romania, where there was a substitution of induced abortion for the use of contraceptive methods. Detailed analysis however shows that the fertility inhibiting effect of legally induced abortion is much less than one might have expected.⁶²

PRO-NATALIST PROGRAMMES

As mentioned above, it becomes difficult to isolate the impact of abortion legislation because of the simultaneous introduction of various pro-natalist programmes. In principle, population policies and

programmes cover all measures that have an impact on mortality, nuptiality, migration and fertility. In the context of socialist Europe, there has been nothing particularly interesting about population policies and programmes designed to influence mortality, nuptiality and migration. There are however two aspects of population policies and programmes in socialist Europe which are particularly interesting. Both of these influence fertility. The first type of policy is coercive in nature and involves the prohibition and prosecution of induced abortions, or alternatively, relaxations in abortion laws. Such coercive measures also involve prohibitions on the sale of contraceptives, as in Romania. The second type of policy is not coercive in nature, but hinges instead, on incentives. These pro-natalist programmes include paid pre-maternity and post-maternity leave, cash birth grants and family allowances. Arguably, these pro-natalist measures were not initially introduced on grounds of boosting fertility, but on grounds of redistribution of income and equity. Specifically, they were intended to reduce the burdens of large families by decreasing inequalities in the size distribution of per capita household income caused by differing numbers of children in different households. Pro-natalist programmes also include preferential access to new housing and taxes on childless couples and those who are unmarried.⁶³ These policies, which intend to support the family as an institution, also include the subsidisation of services like transport, education, health care and recreation, exemption from military service and preferential treatment in obtaining jobs. Amongst the countries of socialist Europe, it is only in Yugoslavia that there has not been a pronounced pro-natalist swing. On the contrary, since 1969 there has been a national policy of family planning in Yugoslavia. This does not imply the non-existence of family allowances in Yugoslavia, but such allowances have invariably been introduced on grounds of equity rather than on grounds of increasing fertility.

Cash birth grants figure in all the countries other than Yugoslavia. Till 1972 such cash birth grants in Bulgaria were 20 leva for the first child, 200 leva for the second child, 500 leva for the third child and 20 leva for each subsequent child. The cash birth grants thus placed the greatest emphasis on the third child.⁶⁴ Only nominal payments were made for higher birth orders, part of the reason for this being the general shortage of housing of larger sizes. Coupled with the restrictions on abortions in 1972/73, cash birth grants for the first child were increased to 100 leva and those for the second child to 250 leva. In 1975 the cash birth grants were increased yet again to 100 leva for the fourth and subsequent children.⁶⁵ An idea of the size of the cash birth grants can be gauged from the fact that in 1968 the grant for births of the third order amounted to 14 per cent of the average annual wage of Bulgaria.⁶⁶ Unlike in Bulgaria, the cash birth grant in Czechoslovakia is in the nature of a layette grant and does not vary with parity. Starting off with the second child, such grants were 1000 koruna till

1971, but were thereafter doubled to 2000 koruna. In the early seventies, such cash birth grants amounted to 3 per cent of the average annual wage ⁶⁷ in the G D R, cash birth grants varied with parity in the earlier years, but have become independent of parity since 1977. In the fifties there were no cash birth grants for the first and the second child. The grant was 100 marks for the third child, 250 marks for the fourth child and 500 marks for the first child, 600 marks for the second child, 700 marks for the third child, 850 marks for the fourth child and 1000 marks for each subsequent child. Since 1977, cash birth grants have been 1000 marks, irrespective of parity. In Hungary there is a combination of a cash maternity benefit and a layette grant. Prior to 1967, the layette grant was in the form of a voucher worth 400 forints. Since 1967 it has however been a cash birth grant which was dependent on parity till 1974. The grant used to be 1100 forints for the first child, 1000 forints for all children up to the fifth one and 2000 forints for each subsequent child. Since 1974, the grant has been 2500 forints, irrespective of parity. Cash birth grants in Poland cannot easily be enumerated, since these grants, introduced concomitantly with other pro-natalist measures in 1976, are three times the monthly family allowance, subject to a minimum of 500 zloty. They are thus inversely related to family income per capita and there is a whole range of cash birth grants depending on the family's per capita income. The grants also vary with parity. There are no cash birth grants in Romania for births of the first and second order. Although cash birth grants had existed in Romania before 1967, they had been restricted only to births of tenth and higher orders. The pro-natalist measures adopted in 1966 were coupled with a cash birth grant of 1000 lei for births of third and higher orders ⁶⁸.

It is also difficult to tabulate the monthly family allowances, since in some of the countries, they vary not only with parity but also with the family's income. Till 1969, monthly family allowances in Bulgaria were 13 leva for the second, third and fourth child, 10 leva for the fifth child and 5 leva for each subsequent child. There was no monthly allowance for the first child. In 1969 the allowances were altered to 5 leva for the first child, 15 leva for the second child, 35 leva for the third child and 5 leva for each subsequent child. In Czechoslovakia, till 1957 the monthly family allowance was 30 koruna for each child, irrespective of parity. In 1957 the allowances were changed to 70 koruna for the first child, 100 koruna for the second child, 140 koruna for the third child, 180 koruna for the fourth child and 220 koruna for each subsequent child. In 1968 they were increased yet again to 90 koruna for the first child, 240 koruna for the second child, 350 koruna for the third and fourth child and 240 koruna for each subsequent child. In 1973 allowances were increased to 340 koruna for the second child, 450 koruna for the third child, and 400 koruna for the fourth child, allowances for other orders of parity remained unchanged. Since 1977 monthly family allowances in the G D R have been 20 marks for the

first and second child, 50 marks for the third child, 60 marks for the fourth child and 70 marks for each subsequent child. In the early fifties, monthly family allowances in Hungary were 75 forints for the second child, 105 forints for the third child, 80 forints for the fourth child, 90 forints for the fifth child and 100 forints for each subsequent child. With the swing to pro-natalism in the early seventies, monthly family allowances were drastically increased. In 1973 they were 200 forints for the first child, 400 forints for the second child, 560 forints for the third child and 320 forints for each subsequent child. In 1974 the monthly allowance for the second child was increased to 600 forints. In 1975 the allowances were increased all round to 850 forints for the first child, 950 forints for the second child and 1050 forints for each subsequent child. The Romanian swing to pro-natalism in 1966/67 was accompanied by an increase in the monthly family allowance from 100 lei (irrespective of parity) to 130 lei (irrespective of parity). There was yet another increase to 140 lei, irrespective of parity, in 1979. In Hungary the effects of the introduction of family allowances have been studied in some detail.⁶⁹ It was found that family allowances were claimed more by women with lower levels of education and lower incomes than by working women, who in general had higher levels of education and income. A pre-condition for the claiming of family allowances in Hungary was prior employment for one year. Despite the increase in family allowances, the fertility levels of dependent women who could not claim family allowances because of this pre-condition, continued to decline. The fertility levels of employed women did however rise and there was also a slight rise in the gross reproduction rate. The impact was not as great for women working in agriculture, since in view of the seasonal character of employment of working women who were members of agricultural cooperatives, the pre-condition of a minimum number of working days in the previous year was not always met.⁷⁰

Other pro-natalist measures introduced in socialist Europe include the use of the tax system to penalise those who are not married or have no children.⁷¹ In January 1968, Bulgaria increased taxes from 5 per cent to 10 per cent for all men and women who were over 30 years of age and continued to be unmarried. Taxes were also increased to the same extent for married couples who did not have children after five years of marriage. In Czechoslovakia, income tax reductions are granted for the first child. Since 1966, Romania has also used the tax system to penalise those who have no children.⁷² For births of fourth and higher orders, special reductions in income taxes are permitted. A childlessness tax is imposed on men and women who are over 26 years of age and have no children, irrespective of whether they are married or not.

In view of the housing shortage, there are social provisions for large families. In Bulgaria, families with three or more children obtain privileges in housing, employment and higher education. A provision

was introduced in Vidin whereby the third child of an employee would be taken care of at the expense of the enterprise till the age of 18.⁷³ Families with three or more children are not only granted larger accommodation, they also receive priority in receiving housing loans, since 1968 preferential low-interest housing loans to newly married couples have also been available in Czechoslovakia. After the birth of the first child, a clause permits the writing off of part of the loan. Hungary also has special provisions for large families and orders and medals existed between 1951 and 1957 for mothers with more than a certain number of children. Bulgaria and Romania also confer titles, orders and medals to mothers of large families.

Provisions of maternity leave are also used to help raise fertility levels. Since 1968 a provision for paid maternity leave had existed in Bulgaria. This amounted to 120 days for the first child, 150 days for the second, 180 days for the third and 120 days for each subsequent child. With the swing to pro-natalism in 1973, the paid maternity leave was supplemented by a paid post-maternity leave of 180 days for first births, 210 days for second births, 240 days for third births and 180 days for higher order births.⁷⁴ Special supplements to wages have been introduced to protect the wages of expectant and nursing mothers who cannot work at their regular jobs.⁷⁵ In Czechoslovakia the length of paid maternity leave has been increased from 18 weeks to 26 weeks and paid post-maternity leave for a period of one year was introduced in 1970.⁷⁶ In addition to this paid post-maternity leave, unpaid leave for another year would be freely granted with the job protected. In 1971 the provisions for paid post-maternity leave were extended up to the second year and were also extended to non-working women. As in Bulgaria, special supplements to wages have been introduced to protect the wages of expectant and nursing mothers who cannot work at their regular jobs.⁷⁷ In the G.D.R., paid maternity leave is for 6 weeks and paid post-maternity leave for 20 weeks, with the latter increasing to 22 weeks after multiple or difficult births. Pregnant women, nursing women and women with children under 1 year of age have been sanctioned special employment rights under the Labour Code. They cannot be given work which might be hazardous to health and the working week is reduced, without a loss in wages, for full-time working mothers with two or more dependents under 16 years of age. Paid leave known as *babyjahr* has been introduced and is granted for births of second and higher orders, from the end of maternity leave till the child is 1 year of age. In Hungary paid post-maternity leave is granted for 5 months and extended leave provisions of up to 25 months were introduced in 1967, increased in 1969 to up to 31 months.⁷⁸ An additional provision allows a working woman to stay at home and bring up her child till the child is 3 years of age, with an allowance equal to about a third of the average pay of working women. Since May 1982 a father has also been entitled to such child-care, leave provided that the child is at least 1 year of age.⁷⁹ In Poland post-maternity leave is

granted for 1 year, with employment rights protected. In Romania paid maternity leave was increased to 52 days in 1966 and paid post-maternity leave to 60 days

CONCLUSION

Despite the adoption of pro-natalist programmes, in recent years the annual rate of growth of population in socialist Europe has been remarkably low. The G.D.R. has experienced close to zero rates of population growth. This has meant that in these countries, particularly in the G.D.R., greater emphasis has had to be placed on increasing labour productivity to foster economic growth. As the population has aged, a rise in death rates in the late sixties and seventies has added to the effects of a fall in the birth rates. The decline in fertility has had quite serious effects, which aggregate country-wide figures tend to obscure. In view of rural to urban migration and the resultant unfavourable age and sex compositions in rural areas as compared to urban areas, the fertility decline has led to adverse effects in rural areas and the agricultural sector. Quite apart from the fact that the age compositions of the agricultural labour force have been unfavourable, there have also been shortages of agricultural labour. By contrast, the effects of restrictions on abortion and pro-natalist programmes on boosting up fertility seem to have been rather transient.⁸⁰ While there have been other important reasons for the recent switch in socialist Europe from extensive growth to intensive growth, the shortage of labour inputs has also been a primary consideration. Neither coercion nor incentives seem to have worked in pushing up fertility. It would be interesting to see if further restrictions on abortions or more expanded pro-natalist programmes are introduced to take care of the problem.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 See T. Frejka, 'Induced Abortion and Fertility: A Quarter Century of Experience in Eastern Europe', *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1983; M. Kaser, *Health Care in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, Croom Helm, London, 1976; C. Tietze, 'The Demographic Significance of Legal Abortion in Eastern Europe', *Demography*, Vol. 1, 1964; C. Tietze, 'Induced Abortion as a Method of Fertility Control', in S. J. Behrman, L. Corsa and R. Freedman (eds.), *Fertility and Family Planning, A World View*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1969; D. V. Glass, 'Fertility Trends in Europe since the Second World War', *Population Studies*, Vol. 22, 1968; J. Berent, 'Causes of Fertility Decline in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union', *Population Studies*, Vol. 24, 1970; H. P. David, *Family Planning and Abortion in the Socialist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe*, The Population Council, New York, 1970; R. J. McIntyre, 'Pronatalist Programmes in Eastern Europe', *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 27, 1975; R. Andorka, *Determinants of Fertility in Advanced Societies*, Methuen, London, 1978; R. Galetskia, 'Demograficheskaya situatsiya v stranakh-chlenakh SEV', *Voprosy ekonomiki*, No. 4, 1974, *Economic Survey of Europe in 1974*, Part II, and the C.I.C.R.E.D. 1974 volumes *La Population De La Bulgarie*, *La Population De La Tchecoslovaquie*, *The Population of Hungary*, *The Population of Poland*, *La Population De La Roumanie* and *The Population of Yugoslavia*.

- 2 Unless otherwise stated, all figures are from various issues of UN *Demographic Yearbooks*
- 3 Berent, op cit
- 4 Glass, op cit and E Szabady, K Tekse and R Pressat, 'La Population Des Pays Socialistes Europeens La fecondite', *Population*, Vol 21, 1966
- 5 Berent, op cit
- 6 *The Population of Yugoslavia*, op cit
- 7 Let B be the annual number of live births, P the total population, W_r the number of women in the reproductive age-groups and W the total number of women Then algebraically, $B/P = B/W_r \cdot W_r/W \cdot W/P$ Berent, op cit
- 8 Also see, *Levels and Trends of Fertility Throughout the World, 1950-1970*, Population Studies No 59, United Nations, 1977
- 9 Berent, op cit for the B/W_r figures
- 10 Ibid
- 11 For detailed figures, refer to various issues of *Demographic Yearbook*
- 12 Berent, op cit
- 13 In the period 1962-80 net reproduction rates of less than unity were exhibited by Bulgaria in 1962, 1964-67, 1971-72 and 1980, by Czechoslovakia in 1967-70, by the G D R in 1972-80, by Hungary in 1962-73 and 1978-80, by Romania in 1963 and by Yugoslavia in 1977-78 In 1975 the net reproduction rate in the G D R was as low as 0.730
- 14 V St Kassabov 'La Natalite en Bulgarie Resultants, perspectives, politique', *Population*, Vol 29, 1974, and C Blayo, 'La Population Des Pays Socialistes Europeens Autres aspects de l'evolution demographique', *Population*, Vol 21, 1966
- 15 Berent, op cit and Galetskia, op cit
- 16 *Demografia*, 1970
- 17 *Fertility and Family Planning in Europe Around 1970 A Comparative Study of Twelve National Surveys*, Population Studies No 58, 1976, United Nations 1976
- 18 Kaser, op cit
- 19 V Srb, *Vyzkum o rodiovostvi*, Prague, 1959 and the reference cited in note 17
- 20 Frejka, op cit
- 21 Kaser, op cit and Frejka op cit Also see, K Lungwitz, 'Economic and Social Problems of Birth Trends in the GDR', *Wirtschaftswissenschaft*, No 11, 1974, H P David and R J McIntyre, *Reproductive Behaviour Central and Eastern European Experience*, Springer, New York, 1981
- 22 Frejka, op cit
- 23 David, op cit and Frejka, op cit
- 24 Ibid
- 25 Frejka, op cit
- 26 *Fertility and Family Planning in Europe Around 1970*, op cit
- 27 Berent's comparisons for Hungary bear this out, standardised data show a narrower educational fertility differential
- 28 Andorka, op cit
- 29 Berent, op cit
- 30 *Studia Demograficzne*, No 31, 1973 and No 37, 1974
- 31 Andorka, op cit, *Demografia*, Vol 8, No 1, 1965, *Studia Demograficzne*, No 19, 1969
- 32 Berent, op cit Working wives are usually concentrated at the two ends of the reproductive bracket An analysis of the differential cannot be conducted using generation fertility since employment histories of women are not generally known An analysis using current fertility suffers from the disadvantage that women giving birth in a particular year are normally not employed in that particular year What is meant therefore by working women is women who usually work
- 33 Berent, op cit This is brought out in the age-specific rates An increase in the proportion of working women brought into the labour force women in the most fertile ages and thus raised the fertility of working women as compared to non-working women Over time, working women also came to include a larger proportion of older married women with a relatively larger number of children The statistical nature of the correlation therefore remains suspect Andorka, op cit gives an alternative explanation for greater fertility amongst working women as compared to non-working women in Hungary after 1967 This hinges on the pro-

- natalist programmes that were introduced. These pro-natalist programmes heavily favoured employed women and led to an increase in the fertility of employed women, while the decline in fertility of dependent women continued according to the previous trend. This led to an inversion of the fertility differential according to employment status.
- 34 *Fertility and Family Planning in Europe Around 1970*, op cit
- 35 Andorka, op cit. Also see, R Andorka, 'Comparative Demographic Analysis of Socio-Cultural Determinants of Fertility in European Socialist Countries where Fertility is Around the Replacement Level', International Population Conference, Manila, 1981
- 36 See the source quoted in note 34
- 37 Andorka, op cit. Andorka's figures for Hungary show that the negative relationship between fertility and locality size exists only for settlements whose population exceed 10,000. For small settlements there is no such inverse relationship. It can be hypothesised that since small villages were economically stagnant and suffered from a negative migration balance, this could have encouraged the population of these villages to have larger families. Nor was fertility in urban areas clearly correlated with locality size of the settlements or their agricultural and industrial character. The suggestion is that it is factors like type of residence and distance from the central city that influence fertility more than locality size.
- 38 See the source quoted in note 34
- 39 Berent, op cit
- 40 See Andorka's paper at the International Population Conference, referred to earlier
- 41 Berent, op cit
- 42 F Lorimer, *The Population of Europe and the Soviet Union: History and Prospects*, Geneva, 1946
- 43 In addition to the references in note 1, see *Measures, Policies and Programmes Affecting Fertility, with Particular Reference to National Family Planning Programmes*, Population Studies No 51, 1972, United Nations, M Potts, 'Legal Abortion in Eastern Europe', *Eugenics Review*, Vol 59, No 4, 1967, M Potts, 'Bulgaria', *International Social Security Review*, Vol 21, No 1, 1968, C Tietze and H Lehfeldt, 'Legal Abortion in Eastern Europe', *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol 175, No 13, 1961, C Tietze, 'Statistical and Health Aspects of Abortion', in *The Population Debate: Dimensions and Perspectives*, Papers of the World Population Conference, Bucharest, 1974, Vol II, United Nations, 1975, H P David and N H Wright, 'Abortion Legislation: The Romanian Experience', *Studies in Family Planning*, Vol 2, No 10, 1971, A Klinger, 'Demographic Effects of Abortion Legislation in Some European Socialist Countries', in *World Population Conference*, 1965, Vol II, United Nations, 1967, and K H Mehlan, 'Reducing abortion rate and increasing fertility by social policy in the German Democratic Republic', in *World Population Conference*, 1965, Vol II, United Nations, 1967
- 44 Mehlan, op cit
- 45 *Durzhaven vestnik*, 2 April 1968
- 46 Kaser, op cit
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- 48 Kaser, op cit
- 49 Andorka, op cit
- 50 See B Berelson, 'Romania's 1966 anti-abortion decree: The demographic experience of the first decade', *Population Studies*, Vol 33, No 2, 1979. The 1966 decree was modified a little in April 1973. Also see, David and Wright, op cit
- 51 Prior to February 1960, some liberalisation was implicit in the legislation of January 1952, which permitted abortion on undefined socio-medical grounds. Abortions were made available on request up to the tenth week of pregnancy, in 1969. Frejka, op cit
- 52 There was in addition legislation in 1977 for Slovenia and in 1978 for Croatia
- 53 *World Population Trends and Policies*, 1981 Monitoring Report, Vol II, Population Studies No 79, 1982, United Nations
- 54 Kaser, op cit, Frejka, op cit, Berent, op cit, and McIntyre, op cit. Also see, J L Scott, *Projections of the Population of the Communist Countries of Eastern Europe*,

- by *Age and Sex 1965-1985*, U S Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, International Population Reports, Series P-91, No 14, 1965
- 55 David, op cit, Economic Survey of Europe in 1974, and various issues of *Demographic Yearbook*
- 56 David, op cit
- 57 See the figures in various issues of *Demographic Yearbook*
- 58 Frejka, op cit
- 59 See the papers by Tietze and Scott, op cit
- 60 Frejka, op cit
- 61 Ibid
- 62 Ibid
- 63 David, op cit, Kaser op cit, McIntyre, op cit, Andorka, op cit, Galetskia op cit, *Demografia*, Vol 10, No 4, 1968, *Statistikai Szemle*, Vol 49, No 4, 1971, *Revista de Statistica*, No 9, 1967, M Macura, 'Population Policies in Socialist Countries of Europe', *Population Studies*, Vol 28, No 3, 1974, E Szabady, 'Gainful occupation and motherhood position of women in Hungary', *Population Review*, Vol 13, Nos 1-2, 1969, E Szabady, 'Impact of the new child care allowances', *New Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol 48, 1972, S N Iyer, 'Degree of protection under family allowance schemes a statistical study of selected countries', *International Labour Review*, Vol 94, No 5, 1966, 'Law concerning improved conditions for pregnant women and mothers in Czechoslovakia', *International Labour Review*, Vol 90, No 2, 1963, and M Srnska, 'Employment of women in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic', *International Labour Review*, Vol 92, No 5, 1965
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- 73 *Problemés économiques*, No 3, 1979
- 74 McIntyre, op cit
- 75 *Durzhaven vestnik*, 4 April 1975
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BOOK REVIEW

Assam Under X-Ray

Amalendu Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, People's Publishing House, 1977, republished 1988, Rs 150

The writing of this book goes back to the early 1970s when the Government of India was making preparations for the observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Indian freedom. The Ministry of Education requested the Indian Council of Historical Research to bring out a series of books on the role of central and state legislatures during the freedom struggle. The Council acceded to the request and assigned the job in relation to Assam to Prof Guha.

Although thus beginning as a monograph on the role of the Assam state legislature in freedom struggle, the volume provided, says R S Sharma in his Foreword, 'valuable background for an understanding of the colonial socio-economic structure. He has discussed the politics of anti-imperialism both in the legislature and outside, and marked shifts within the national movement in economic objectives and political ideas in the context of peasant and labour problems' (pp v-vi).

The eleven years that intervened between the dates on which the first and second editions of the volume were brought out—1977–1988—saw Assam in a new light, symbolising the emergence of a movement which threatened the unity of Assam within itself and with the rest of India. That movement threatened to make Assam an area where Indian nationalism is irrelevant. Negating the highly optimistic note struck at the end of the book, i.e., 'little nationalism once more anchored itself on the firm base of great nationalism', the Assamiya ethnic group organising itself in the AASU and the AGP took up cudgels on the one hand against the all-India Centre and on the other against the non-Assamiya communities in Assam itself.

It is the great merit of this volume that, though it concludes with the attainment of Indian freedom and therefore does not describe the sequences that led to the emergence of this movement, the reader can get an idea of the socio-political forces that culminated in the emergence of the AASU–AGP group and its two-fold contradiction—with the Centre and with the non-Assamiya ethnic groups in Assam.

Look at the very opening subsection of the book under the title, 'British Conquest of North-east India'

It was since the acquisition of the Diwani of Bengal that the East India Company came into direct contact with the medieval kingdoms of Jaintia, Cachar and Assam as well as the tribal communities of their adjoining hills. These sparsely-populated territories did not yet have enough economic worth or surplus revenue-yielding potentiality to attract the attention of British annexationists. They had therefore been left undisturbed, until the Burmese invasion (1817–24) of Assam and the Cachar plains brought an end to this policy of indifference. In November 1823 David Scott, the magistrate of Rangpur and Civil Commissioner for the district of Goalpara and Garo Hills (formed in 1822), was also appointed Agent to the Governor-General on the Northeast Frontier of Bengal. 'We have not come (here) to quench our thirst for the conquest of your kingdom', proclaimed a manifesto published in Bengali on behalf of the interventionist British-Indian troops, 'but to destroy our enemies, interested as we are to protect ourselves'. The Burmese were finally forced to surrender their claim over Assam under the Treaty of Yandabo, 1926.

During the following decade and a half, the kingdoms of Jaintia, Cachar and Assam, along with their dependencies, and all the petty, independent tribal states of the Khasi Hills were annexed. Further annexation of the remaining hills was subsequently completed step by step in the face of stiff tribal resistance. The North Cachar Hills were organised into a separate administrative unit, after their subjugation was completed by 1854. A part of the Naga Hills was annexed in 1866, the country of the Lhota Nagas, in 1875, of the Angami Nagas, in 1878–80, and of the AD Nagas, in 1889. The Garo Hills, long under loose political control, was made a separate district in 1869, but the Garos could not be brought under control during the years 1871–89, but the formation of the Lushai Hills district took place only in 1898. The boundaries of the British power in north-east India were in fact always moving, always in a flux, right up to its last days in India. Nevertheless, the British province, that came to be known as Assam, took shape more or less by 1873.

The Raj appeared on the scene in the guise of saviours of the people suffering from a situation of chaos, lawlessness and oppression that had persisted since the 1770s, starting with the Moamaria Civil War and culminating in the Burmese occupation of the Assam plains (1817–24). But it soon dawned on the people that the Raj had come to stay. Its purpose was to turn Assam into an agricultural estate of tea-drinking Britons and to transform local traditional institutions in such manner as to suit the colonial pattern of exploitation. People found out from experience that the new

masters' immediate concern was the extortion of land-revenue even to the detriment of the welfare of their subjects. After assuming the charge of Assam from his predecessor in 1832, Robertson found 'its inhabitants emigrating, its villages decaying and its revenue annually declining'. The Court of Directors were grieved to learn that 'a dreadful extortion had beggared the ryots and rendered a large portion of Assam waste in which up to our conquest such a thing as jungle was hardly to be seen' (pp 1-2)

Unlike in several other parts of India therefore, the north-eastern region of India was not in the process of forming distinct nationalities even at its initial stage in pre-British days. It consisted of a large number of territories each inhabited by a distinct ethnic group and ruled by its king. Even the most developed ethnic group among them—Ahoms—had not developed the characteristics of an emerging nation capable of bringing the other ethnic groups into its overlordship. Hence the perpetual conflicts and clashes among the various ethnic groups that inhabit this part of the present-day Indian Union and neighbouring Burma. Here, as in the rest of India, therefore, 'while all were fighting against all, the Briton walked in' (Marx)

As in the rest of India so in the north-eastern region too, the new alien rulers had to face stiff resistance not only from the people at large but from two groups that stood closest to the new rulers, which gave birth to what the author calls the beginning of modern political consciousness. This is illustrated in the activities of two pioneers of Assamiya nationalism. Says the author

Despite his early collaboration with the British, Maniram—the last of the old aristocrats—had turned an extremist and had by then taken an anti-British stance. On the other hand, born in an enlightened Brahmin landowner family and educated in the Hindu College of Calcutta, Anandaram believed in the regenerative role of British rule and remained a loyal Government servant until his death. These documents reveal two opposite trends in the new political consciousness that was emerging. But both reflected on certain popular grievances that were going to dominate Assam politics for a century to come. Hence, the thoughts contained in them need a careful assessment, in the context of the times (pp 19-20)

What were the demands that the two pioneers articulated and what was the nature of the movement they initiated? The author explains:

In one of his two memorials, Dewan pleaded for the restoration of the Rajah's domain in upper Assam as a Protectorate, which—once conceded in 1833—was finally resumed in 1839 on charges of maladministration. He resented the reduction of the upper and landed classes to the most abject and hopeless state of misery through the abolition of their offices, the liberation of their slaves

and their unprecedented subjection to the assessment of land revenue. He protested against the appointment of several 'Bengalees from Sylhet' and Marwaris as mauzadars when a number of respectable Assamese were already out of employ. It was pointed out by him that by the introduction of new customs, 'innumerable courts, an unjust system of taxation and the objectionable treatment of the Hill Tribes, the consequence of which has been a constant state of warfare

neither the British Government nor their subjects have gained any benefit'. It was charged that the continued sale of abkari opium by the Government had made the people unfit for agriculture, and that the discontinuation of the puja at Kamakhya had invited calamities upon the country.

However, the memorial was not blind to the good aspects of British rule in Assam. It noted that by stopping such cruel punitive practices as the mutilation of one's limbs and the forcible abduction of virgins from private homes, by removing all way-side transit duties and by abolishing the system of forced labour for keeping roads clear for the Government, 'the British Government has earned for itself inestimable praise and renown'.

In course of the memorial, both an immediate stop to the sale of monopoly opium and a phased programme of gradual prohibition of poppy cultivation within twenty years were recommended. A cheaper and simpler system of administering justice through Panchayats was also advocated, alongside the restoration of native rule under British protection, at least in a part of Assam.

Dewan's political platform was no doubt a revivalist one, betraying his orthodoxy and basic loyalty to an outmoded social system. Nevertheless, he was not totally blind to the needs for change and for opening up of the country for exploitation of its resources. He admitted that the abolition of slavery and the introduction of modern schools would do good to the common people. Even though no concessional land grants were made available to him, he came forward to establish two small proprietary tea gardens of his own, which were confiscated by the state after his execution for treason in 1858. Incidentally, the second notable Assamese tea planter was Rosheswar Barua, who established about half a dozen tea gardens in the sixties, but could not survive the tea crisis of 1866-69. In the same crisis, sixteen Indian tea gardens in Goalpara district alone were literally nipped in their buds.

Dewan did not subscribe to an ideology, progressive enough even in the context of his times, nor was he a very consistent freedom fighter throughout his career. But because of his role in the revolt of 1857, it is the anti-imperialist image of his that lives through peoples' memory—in folk-songs and modern patriotic literature. He had an entrepreneurial career which was objectively progressive. He was indeed a bridge between the old and the new.

Dhekial-Phukan, on the other hand, was in every respect a product of the modern age of enlightenment. He got his inspiration from the contemporary 'Bengal Renaissance' and from what he read about England's material progress and Peter the Great's reforms in medieval Russia. He dreamt of days when reforms and material progress would surely dawn upon Assam. He reportedly wrote to Hemchandra Barua (1835-96), a confirmed atheist and young social reformer of the day: 'A group of people styled as Young Bengal has emerged in Bengal and some people in Assam are absorbing what is good in them, but not their vices. My mind is full of joy at the sight of this germination.'

One of his publications in Bengali, *Notes on Laws of Bengal*, Vol I (Calcutta, 1855), was modelled on Blackstone's commentary on English Law Digest; it dealt with such topics as principles of morality and law, human rights, liberty of the person and master-servant relations. This book and his articles in the Assamese periodical, *Arunoday* (1846-83), reveal his faith in the bourgeois values of life.

The memorial Dhekial-Phukan submitted also espoused the cause of the persecuted Assamese language. It had lost its rightful place to Bengali in local schools and courts in 1837 on the false ground that it was a dialect of the latter language. The battle for due recognition of Assamese as a distinct and separate language was carried on through Dhekial-Phukan's long-drawn efforts, alongside those of the American Baptist missionaries. As a result of the agitation, Assamese was finally recognised for use in courts and schools of Assam proper several years after his death, under the Bengal Government Order of 19 April 1873. Bengali, of course, co-existed side by side. Besides, due to paucity of suitable books in Assamese, text-books published in Bengali continued to be in use in all high schools in the plains, at least for another two decades.

In the same memorial, Dhekial-Phukan also laid bare the existing evils of the administration and advocated for an increase in the number of mofussil courts and native judges, with enlarged powers for the latter. Like Dewan he too recommended the lightening of the tax burden and simplification of the complicated procedure in the law courts. In his opinion, the Bengal system of permanent settlement of land tenure would not suit the needs of Assam.

As to the opium policy, Dhekial-Phukan warned that the replacement of locally-produced opium by abkari opium, sold on a monopoly basis by the Government, would not at all lead to the eradication of the evil. He rather suggested that the sale of Government opium be discontinued forthwith and that local poppy cultivation be subjected to heavy taxation—the tax being enhanced progressively from time to time. Thus, the opium policy advocated by him was basically the same as Dewan's (pp 20-22).

The new bourgeois middle class growing in the womb of British rule and belonging to the Assamiya ethnic group was in other words following in the foot steps of its counterpart in Bengal. As in the latter province so in Assam too,

public opinion was increasingly focused on three social evils of the day—(i) the plight of the widows of Brahmin, Kayastha and Daivajna castes, (ii) the prevalent practice of polygamy and (iii) the wide-spread addiction to opium. Intellectuals of the day boldly expressed themselves on these issues not only through the local press—there were three such periodicals in Assam proper in 1872—but also through creative literature. Educated people formed societies and circles for dissemination of scientific knowledge and ideas about social reforms. In the years 1857–59, the Jnan-Pradayini-Sabha (Society for Disseminating Knowledge) was functioning at Nowgong, under the patronage of Dhekial-Phukan. Yet another society with the same name was formed in upper Assam in 1857, which held regular Sunday study circles. Still earlier, towards the close of 1855, the Assam Desh Hitaishini Sabha was formed at Sibsagar for holding study circles every Saturday. Poornananda Sharma Deka, a Mohrur in the Criminal Court, who was its secretary in September 1856, issued a circular urging upon the local people to represent their manifold grievances to the Lieutenant-Governor Halliday, then camping in the district. It appears that the same Poornananda Mohrur was suspended from service for six months in the 1858 trial of the mutineers, for not reporting certain allegedly seditious proceedings to the Government.

In 1872, the Assamese Literary Society was formed in Calcutta at the initiative of its Assamese residents. On behalf of this Society, Jagannath Barooah (1851–1907) and Manik Chandra Barooah (1851–1915), then studying in the Presidency College, submitted a memorandum on 21 May 1872 to the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, drawing his attention to the potential resources of Assam. The memorandum urged upon him to connect the province with Bengal by a railway line—a proposal which was already under his consideration. These activities reflected the dawning of modern political consciousness in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Bengali-speaking districts of Sylhet and Cachar, by that time, were much more involved in the mainstream of Bengal politics. Nevertheless students therefrom, who were residents in Calcutta, asserted their separate identity by forming the Shrihatta Sammilani in 1877.

There was no official recognition of this growing political consciousness of the people even at the local level of administration. On 11 June 1852, one hundred and thirteen residents of Gauhati submitted a petition to the district magistrate for the introduction of the permissive Bengal Act of 1850 for the establishment of a municipal board. Accordingly, the first statutory municipal board

came into being in 1853—an all-European board, with only three nominated members. No other board in Assam was constituted under the Act. When the question of introducing the Bengal Municipal Act of 1864 came before the Commissioner, he took the stand that Assam's prevailing social conditions did not permit the use of the Act. He asserted that Gauhati was nothing but a permanent camp of Government officials whose butlers and followers constituted the townspeople, and that Assam's towns were merely glorified villages, used as centres for policing the surrounding countryside. Nevertheless, due to insistence of the higher authorities, the Act was eventually extended to Gauhati in May 1865.

Rudimentary beginnings of local boards also had the same history. For example, the ferry fund earmarked for the construction of roads and bridges was in every district administered by a small committee of nominated officials and non-officials. But the majority of the Committee members were of course Europeans, excepting in such districts as Goalpara and Kamrup, where tea interests were minimal.

At the Presidency level, Bengal had a Legislative Council formed in 1862 under the Indian Councils Act of 1861. But the representation on this Council was limited to the Bengal Division alone, to the exclusion of the Assam Division (pp. 23–25).

The socio-economic and political situation confronting the new Assamese intelligentsia is described as follows by the author:

In this context, the new-born, rickety Assamese intelligentsia of the period found itself to be an insignificant minority in the 'urban' sector. Towns of Assam were still mere permanent camps of Government servants and traders or were just glorified villages, where non-indigenous elements constituted the overwhelmingly dominant section. This situation of a complete lack of urbanisation, alongside of the pre-capitalist production relations, was not, and could not be, rapidly altered by the new set-up. Super-imposed as it was on a plantation economy—subjugated to foreign capital and linked with immigrant usury and merchant capital—could not bring in radical transformation within the local society itself. The start in modernisation was indeed a false one.

Under the circumstances, the extent of urbanisation that was achieved in due course was practically nil. The incipient Assamese middle class that was coming up was extremely small, weak and unconsolidated as a class. Links between the plantation economy and the surrounding peasant economy—both labour-short—remained tenuous and minimal. Except land, practically all other inputs of production for the expanding modern sector were brought from outside the province, capital and enterprise from the metropolis itself and labour from other Indian provinces. A dual economy, more

precisely a multi-sectoral, plural economy, began functioning at different levels

In such an unenviable and complex situation—a situation where tribalism and elements of feudalism persistently coexisted alongside new-born capitalist relations—the early modern political consciousness was bound to be inhibited and get blurred by group rivalries at the court of the colonial masters. But outside it, the peasantry—traditionally unaccustomed to any kind of money taxation and now constantly in dread of the enhancement of land revenue and imposition of new taxes—kept up the smouldering fire of protest and hatred against the Raj.

The emergent middle-class took its own time under the circumstances to identify the root cause of many of the evils with Imperialism. How this happened in due course, how the safety-valve of controlled parliamentary activities was built into the political system, how sections of people got themselves increasingly involved in electoral politics, and finally how the freedom struggles fought outside the legislatures made inroads into the latter and vice-versa—all these will be narrated and discussed in the following chapters (pp 25–26)

This situation was sought to be met by creating communal disruption. The setting up of the Muslim League as an all-India political rival to the Congress and the consequences that followed are well-known. In the north-eastern region, this was concretised in the carving out of a new province named Assam. It consisted of Assam proper, together with Cachar, Goalpara, Garo Hills and the other hill districts and was made a Chief Commissioner's province (formed on February 6, 1874). Although vast in area, the new province with its small population of 2,443,000 had a meagre revenue potential. 'To make it financially viable therefore, the Bengal district of Sylhet was incorporated in the new province.

This raised a storm of protest.

A memorial protesting against the transfer of Sylhet on behalf of both its Hindu and Muslim inhabitants was submitted to the Viceroy on 10 August 1874. The memorialists based their protest on the cultural identity and historical association that Sylhet had with Bengal and the disadvantages of Sylhet's being yoked with a 'backward' region. They further apprehended that the district would have to put up with laws and institutions inferior to what it had been accustomed to in Bengal under the permanent settlement. The Government of India refused on 5 September 1874 to accede to their prayer. However, the petitioners obtained an assurance of no change whatsoever either in the system of law and judicial procedure they had hitherto lived under or in the Bengal principles of settlement and collection of land revenue (pp 27–28).

This marked the beginning of two sets of conflicts—among the three ethnic groups (Assamiya, Bengali and the tribal), and between two (Hindu and Muslim) religious communities. For full seven decades after the formation of this polyglot province of Assam, the wily British rulers used the two sets of conflicts to maintain themselves in power. Congress leadership on the other hand tried to create a semblance of unity to evolve a national consensus against the alien rulers. The absorbing story of how these two forces confronted each other, the elucidation of the economic and political issues involved in the confrontation—such is the content of the major part of the volume under review.

Skipping this long narrative—interesting in itself but not relevant for understanding of the Assam of the 1970s-80s—we may just point out that the Assamiya middle classes who started their political career with the initial agitation against the incorporation of Sylhet into Assam followed in the footsteps of the Bengali middle classes. Like their Bengali counterparts, the Assamiya middle classes developed their own left movement. Congress left, socialist communism, industrial (plantation and oil) strikes, peasant agitations—all these took root in Assam. Students and intelligentsia rising from the Assamiya community had to go to and naturally took inspiration from their counterparts in Calcutta.

It is true that, as two distinct linguistic and cultural groups, the Assamiyas and Bengalis had their conflicts. There was however, no reason why they should find themselves in hostile camps. The concept of linguistic states on which the Congress based itself and the Marxist-Leninist approach to the problem of nationalities, popularised by the Communist Party, in fact helped the co-existence and co-operation of the Assamiyas and Bengalis in the common anti-imperialist democratic movement.

Referring to the 'final phase' of the freedom struggle, i.e., the post-war revolutionary upsurge of 1945-46, the author says,

Factory workers, office employees, students and even policemen in thousands were caught in a wave of strikes, hartals and demonstrations. In Assam, preparations for the all-India railway strike, which was to start with effect from 27 June 1946, became a rallying point of all anti-imperialist political forces. The Railway Board had to concede almost all the demands to avoid the strike. Anti-feudal peasant struggles that broke out in Telengana, Kerala, Bengal and many other regions inspired the share-croppers' struggles in Kamrup and Cachar. On 29 July 1946, there was an inter-provincial general strike in support of the striking post and telegraph workers.

This post-war upsurge from November 1945 to July 1946 assumed an all-India dimension. Solidarity actions in the wake of all these events of national importance were organised by various student

organisations and workers' trade unions in Shillong, Gauhati, Tezpur and other towns. It was in course of such political activities that the CPI in Assam was able to restore its patriotic image that had been damaged after 1942 following its pro-war stand. In course of their month-long tour of the Brahmaputra Valley, the Surma Valley Cultural Squad, sponsored by the Sylhet and Shillong branches of the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association, laid the foundations of a patriotic and revolutionary cultural movement that kept pace with the post-war upsurge. Jyotiprasad Agarwala, by then a disillusioned Congressman, was elected president of the provincial branch of the IPTA at its first conference at Silchar (pp 808-09).

It was against this political background that the British Government decided to open fresh negotiations with Indian leaders. A Cabinet Mission consisting of senior ministers was first sent out (1946) with a plan of settling issues. When this first effort failed, the then Viceroy was asked to resign. The new Viceroy Lord Mountbatten was asked to start it anew, with his own timebound plan for transfer of power.

Assam played a key role in having the Cabinet Mission Plan scuttled and in the Mountbatten Plan being carried through. The essence of the former was the grouping of provinces according to which Assam and Bengal belonged to the same group, the members of the Constituent Assembly in the Group had to sit separately and frame their group constitution. The non-Muslim members objected to this as violative of the principle of self-determination and, supported by the Congress Party and Mahatma Gandhi, boycotted the Group. Protesting against this, the Muslim League withdrew from the whole plan.

Learning from this experience and keeping in mind the multi-lingual and communal character of Assam, the Mountbatten Plan proposed a referendum in the Bengali majority district of Sylhet. The issue was whether Assam as a whole (including Sylhet) should remain in India or go to Pakistan. A majority of 56.6 per cent opted for Pakistan. 'This verdict was not unexpected, and it almost reflected, and it almost reflected the communal composition of the district population' (60 per cent Muslim). Guha concludes 'Sylhet, "the golden calf", which was sacrificed in 1874 to usher in a new province was now once more sacrificed at the altar of a new state'. (p. 320)

Thus ended one chapter of the history of the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual Assam. The Assamiya-Bengali conflict was resolved by the formation of a predominantly Assamiya state, while the Hindu-Muslim problem found its solution in the formation of two separate states (the Indian Union and Pakistan) carved out on a communal basis. New Assam however, was not a unilingual, ethnically unified state. The tribals who constituted the single biggest non-Assamiya community were themselves divided into so many distinct groups that they could not become a cohesive group, the Bengalis who formed the majority in

some parts of the state were, in the state as a whole, a minority, but occupied such a dominant position in the culture and administration of the state that competition between the Assamiya and Bengalee elements in the middle classes became an integral part of Assam politics. Above all, the disturbed conditions in the neighbouring East Pakistan had led to such an enormous entry of refugees into Assam as to create the apprehension that the national identity of Assam would be lost for ever. Hence the two movements in Assam which raised the fear of national disintegration—the language riots of the early 1960s and the 'anti-foreigner' movement of the 70s–80s.

It does not fall within the province of this volume to trace these developments since it ends with the emergence of Swaraj in place of planter Raj. The last pages of the book however, indicates the 'emergence of Hill politics'. This, it will be noted, introduced certain complications in Assam politics after the 'anti-foreigner' movement became the ruling party and has been leading the state's administration. The result is that, four decades after the Sylhet referendum, Assam remains as multi-ethnic and multi-lingual as it ever has been.

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BOOK REVIEW

In Defence of Reform

Abel Aganbegyan (Editor-in-Chief), *Perestroika Annual*, Futura, Great Britain, 1988, pp 346, price \$12.50

It is not often that publishers are inspired to write a Foreword for books they publish. But Mr Robert Maxwell, a publishing czar who presides over a printing empire that includes newspapers and the Pergamon Press, must have chosen to write a Foreword to this book both because he probably sees this as a publishing coup and because he believes that he is dealing with history in the making. To quote from his Foreword:

The essential characteristic of this series is that it brings to the world the thoughts and writings of very distinguished Soviet citizens. This is Soviet society seen from the inside, in a way that would have been impossible before glasnost. Some of the contributors are well known throughout the world. Abel Aganbegyan and Gary Kasparov are obvious examples. Others are not yet as familiar to non-Russian speakers. All are important in Soviet society, and the composite picture they give of the year's progress is a fascinating commentary on what history may well regard as one of the most important developments of the late twentieth century. (p. vi)

If President Gorbachev and his supporters were to succeed, then the process of reform and restructuring that is now underway would indeed be a historic phenomenon determining the shape of the world into the twenty-first century. For what we have on agenda, if the authors of this volume are to be believed, is not the mere acceleration of a retarding economy but its transformation into a more humane and democratic one. The establishment of 'socialist pluralism' through greater democratisation of social and political life and the policy of glasnost are seen as the necessary conditions for the success of economic restructuring or perestroika. These two words have entered the household lexicon world-wide and have transformed global perception of the Soviet Union just as they are transforming the actual conditions of life and social discourse in the socialist country.

How genuine are these reforms and, in the first instance, are they warranted at all? Do they imply revisionism and an abandoning of socialist principles or a movement in the direction of genuine socialism?

Are these reforms aimed at pampering an intellectual and social elite or do they meet the needs of the working people? Does 'socialist pluralism' imply an end to the concept of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'? Does cooperativisation and 'market socialism' mean a retreat to capitalist methods of ownership and organisation? These and hundreds of other questions are coming up across the world where socialists and revolutionaries are expectantly and concernedly examining the meaning and content of Mikhail Gorbachev's blueprint for the revival of the first socialist economy

The book under review is the first of an annual series that Mr Gorbachev's chief economic advisor, Abel Aganbegyan, will edit and which will report to the world the progress of perestroika and glasnost. Published towards the end of 1988 this first volume sums up the developments up to the last quarter of the year including the proceedings of the historic 19th National Party Conference in June 1988. Developments in Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Baltic states are only hinted at since their implication for perestroika was seen only after July, and the earthquake in Armenia as well as Gorbachev's famous address to the UN General Assembly were events that occurred as the book was in print.

The book begins by putting together arguments which are by now familiar—the emergence of the 'pre-Crisis' situation as a result of twenty years of slowdown (*zamedlenie*) through the Brezhnev era and the need to remove the shackles imposed by excessive state regulation and bureaucracy under a system erected by Stalin in the pre-war years. Aganbegyan's essay on 'Economic Reforms' sums up the problems, the tasks and the initiatives taken on this front and Alexander Yakovlev's article on 'The Political Philosophy of Perestroika' examines the concept of glasnost and its relationship to the programme of economic reform.

Glasnost is not confined to the right to voice one's opinion and stick to it. Glasnost is, first and foremost, the right to form an opinion, and to this effect it is necessary to know all that is happening, in all aspects and every detail. Glasnost is the right to independently assess the situation at all levels from the enterprise up to the State. Besides, glasnost lays obligatory demands on the style of economic transactions and, above all, on the style of management (p. 40).

Yakovlev, a member of the Politburo and a close advisor of Gorbachev, emphasises the need for glasnost to have 'grass-roots' support and not become just liberalisation from above but be seen as democratisation from below with greater involvement of people in all aspects of society.

SOURCE OF SUPPORT TO THE REFORM

The question of course is what is the extent of such 'grass-roots support' for the reform? Has a broad-based constituency been created to defend

the changes that have largely been introduced from above? The interesting paper by the sociologist Ms Tatyana Zaslavskaya entitled 'Friends or Foes? Social Forces Working For and Against Perestroika' suggests that while perestroika has more friends than foes, the former are not yet adequately vocal in their support. Zaslavskaya reports to us the results of two surveys, one of them conducted by the institute she heads, which is itself the child of glasnost, called the National Centre for the Study of Public Opinion on Socio-Economic Issues. The first survey, conducted by the Academy of Social Sciences for the Central Committee of the CPSU concludes that 'only one in four or five rank and file workers supports the economic reform without reservations, expects positive results within two or three years. Others doubt its success, or expect results in the distant future. Only a quarter of those polled deem it necessary to restructure their own ways.'

The other survey, conducted among managers, shows a similar lack of enthusiasm for the reform process. Much of the 'scepticism and disbelief in the final triumph of perestroika', which Zaslavskaya refers to, can be attributed to the fact that most workers, managers, professionals and bureaucrats are not too unhappy with what they have. After all it is discontent which fuels any movement for reform and much of the discontent seems to be confined to the 'humanitarian intelligentsia' who are seen as the prime movers of glasnost and perestroika. Zaslavskaya's summing up of the 'forces' ranged in favour of and against perestroika is worth quoting in full:

The *movers* of perestroika are the progressive political leaders and economy managers, along with the radical part of the socio-humanitarian intelligentsia, advanced workers and peasants.

The *followers* of perestroika are the most widespread group. They are found within all social strata except the most conservative ones, which indicates the extraordinarily broad social base for ongoing reforms.

The *allies* of perestroika are workers, peasants and petty entrepreneurs.

Quasi-followers are found in all groups of the intelligentsia involved with management, and among officialdom, while workers, peasants and craftsmen do not need to display any such political mimicry (p 275-6).

Quasi-followers are defined as people who would rather wait and see before throwing their lot fully with the pro-perestroika forces. Then there are those who are 'neutral' or are merely 'watchers' whose political consciousness is of a low level and they permeate across all social and economic groups. Finally there are the 'Reactionaries'—first, the corrupt part of the Soviet and Party apparatus, secondly, executives of trade and services, thirdly, the part of the working class in the pay of the aforementioned groups, and, finally, organised crime', and, the '*Conservatives*—persons who were shaped during the periods

when democracy was suppressed and the command and administrative management flourished. Their outlooks have been permanently affected by social stagnation. For the most part they are convinced of the omnipotence of 'His Majesty the Plan', of the un-Socialist nature of the market, maintain that World War II was won by Stalin's genius, and so on. These last two categories of people are decisively ranged against the process of reform.

The major weakness of this volume is that it does not give an opportunity to those who are said to be opposed to perestroika to put forward their case—however weak that may be. The fact of the matter is that a genuine debate is going on within the Soviet Union, at least among the more articulate sections of the population and there are sincere differences that have come up on a variety of issues. This book is obviously a collection of papers by like-minded people who are clearly more committed to the reform process and to the rejection of Stalinism than most Soviets are as yet. One hopes that future volumes will give us a flavour of the nature of the debate so that we can decide for ourselves who has a stronger case. Admittedly the case of the pro-perestroika and pro-glasnost forces is a strong one and is well articulated in this volume. Papers by Vladimir Kudryavtsev on 'Towards a Socialist Rule-of-Law State' and by Valentin Falin on 'Glasnost: Getting at the Roots' build up a strong case for greater democracy in Soviet society. But the wholesale rejection of Stalin by these authors does not square up with the fact that many ordinary Soviet people see him as a national hero and, in any case, the period of stagnation is really associated with the Brezhnev era with the Stalin era recording a remarkable performance on the economic front. The distinction that may have to be made between the positive and negative aspects of Stalin's rule is not made in any of the papers in this volume and they reflect one viewpoint that is currently vocal and assertive in the Soviet Union. That such views are being openly expressed is a good thing but the final judgement on the Stalin years will have to be a more balanced one than what the authors in this volume are willing to offer. But then, it is just possible that this book is aimed at a Western audience which would fully concur with its perspective.

Some of the other interesting articles in the volume are those of Georgi Arbatov, on the four summit meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev, and Fyodor Burlatsky on the differences in the manner in which Khrushchev, Andropov and Brezhnev acquired and utilised political power, contrasting it with Gorbachev's style. These are interesting both because the two authors give us an eyewitness account, having been close to the course of events, and because they point to greater confidence within the leadership revealing a new style of functioning which is welcome.

DISTURBING TRENDS

As social comments on current Soviet life Kasparov's article on Soviet sport and Metropolitan Alexiy's piece on glasnost and religion are interesting and disturbing. Interesting for they show the complexity of Soviet society and the importance of the reform process, disturbing for they reveal the persistence and regeneration of attitudes which one does not associate with a socialist society. The continuing role of the Church, and we make a distinction between personal religion and the institutional role of the Church, and the persistence of bourgeois attitudes, as in Kasparov's plea that Soviet sportsmen be allowed to retain the money they make in international events and advertise for gain on television, reveal the pervasive influence of bourgeois ideology. And yet they can be combated only through a more open society and not through enforced indoctrination and that one hopes will be made possible by the policy of glasnost. There are other worrying aspects of Soviet life which the papers do not address though they do refer to the problem of alcoholism and organised crime. Apart from these two there is the problem of drugs and violence among youth, an atmosphere of a lack of purpose prevails among many urban youth much like in the West and this will have to be tackled if a new generation has to find new meaning in the struggle for socialism.

However, some of the minor victories notched up by glasnost in reviving critical art and culture which is already creating a space for the revival of socialist culture are captured in the papers by the famous actor, Mikhail Ulyanov ('Theatre and Perestroika') and by Nikolai Chetverikov ('Samizdat without the Halo: A Commentary on the Role of Culture in Perestroika') who sums up the changed atmosphere in the words of the playwright Alexander Gelman 'Yesterday we did not even dare to think of what we are discussing in our newspapers today'.

Of course, so far the greater achievements of the present leadership have been in the area of glasnost than in economic restructuring where the results so far do not inspire one to such fulsome praise as the policy of glasnost has invited. Indeed, the economy has not shown any dramatic results and as recent information revealed by Soviet economists suggests the performance of the agricultural sector continues to be a source of great concern. Moreover, for the first time we have now an estimate of the budget deficit notched up by the central government which amounts to over 11 per cent of the GNP of the Soviet Union. To add to this, mounting trade deficit on account of falling oil prices, a loss in revenue on account of the anti-alcohol campaign and increasing expenditure due to a variety of natural and man-made disasters (earthquakes, Chernobyl and Afghanistan) have all contributed to the nation's economic woes. If Mr Gorbachev has to make any impact on the lives of the ordinary people than he must move quickly in the area of economic reform and if 1988 was more an year of glasnost then 1989 will have to be more an year of perestroika.

WESTERN RESPONSES

Western attitudes to the reform process fall into three distinct categories. Firstly, there is a segment of socialist opinion which hopes that the reform will rejuvenate the socialist cause worldwide, especially in Europe, which was smothered by Stalinism and its fall-out and they hope that Gorbachev will help in the reversal of their own fortunes in Europe where they have been on the defensive for a long time. Many members of the 'God that Failed' generation and activists from the Trotskyite and neo-Marxist groups are currently going ga-ga over 'Gorby'. More importantly, however there are those who fear the success of perestroika and see in this a stronger and a more formidable socialist state emerging and would therefore prefer to put as many fetters around Mr Gorbachev as possible. Mr George Bush and Mrs Thatcher fall clearly in this category. The so-called 'policy review' that Bush has ordered and the 'cooling-off stance' that he has promoted flow from this perception. There is pressure from the military-industrial complex which will lose out if there is further demilitarisation and a cut in the defence budget. A prolonged era of peace can have far-reaching negative consequences for businessmen who have thrived on war. They are joined by ideologically conservative forces which fear Western, especially American, opinion becoming soft on the Soviets. A friendly and popular Gorbachev can do far greater damage to Western capitalism than a menacing one and as successive opinion polls show his personal popularity rising in Europe Mr Bush's advisors are urging caution in further moves towards detente. A third response has been from people like Herr Genscher, the West German Foreign Minister, who would like to build a stable relationship with the Soviet Union in the hope of opening up markets for their goods. Already the promise of joint ventures and export markets in the Soviet Union have forced European and Japanese businessmen to make a beeline for Moscow much as they went to Beijing in the 1970s.

As each of these three groups closely watches and assesses the progress of perestroika in the Soviet Union there is a veritable flood of news and analysis being generated often to fit in with each one's perspective. In that context this series will serve to make available to the outside world regular analysis of what is happening by experts from within the Soviet Union. However, truly objective analysis, to the extent such objectivity is possible, will require that conflicting viewpoints be put forward and both sides of the debate be made known.

Finally, this book which is priced at \$12.50 is obviously meant for the European reader. We hope Progress Publishers, Moscow, will make available cheaper copies of such books even if the policy of *khozraschot* (full-cost accounting) will hence forward make even their books costlier!

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BOOK REVIEW

The 'World We Have Lost'

John Walter and Roger Schofield (eds), *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Societies* (Cambridge Studies In Population, Economy and Society In Past Time—10), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, pp xiv + 335, \$ 35, Hard Cover

The onward march of capitalism as a 'world-system' was expected to make the human societies look like one big joint family. But in reality its uneven development left several segments of this global family to live with the spectre of famine and drought, dearth, disease and 'crisis mortality'. Whenever there was hunger and famine, like in Ethiopia, the developed first world showed some kind of bewilderment towards this crisis as if such a spectre was endemic only to the so-called third world societies. The knowledge of the history of famine and disease in their own societies in the immediate past and the process by which the early modern European societies had overcome the crises of famine and mortality is unfortunately rudimentary. It was to build up the awareness of such as history of the early modern European societies, especially the British, that the social scientists like Peter Laslett and Andrew Appleby dedicated their lives. This book, edited by John Walter and Roger Schofield is appropriately dedicated to the memory of Appleby (who died in 1980). In fact, most of the articles in this volume are written by Appleby's friends and colleagues: they either confirm or refine and elaborate his arguments revolving around 'death and disease in the past'.

The book contains eight articles: the first, by John Walter and Roger Schofield (pp 1–73), is a summary of the entire range of recent research into famine, disease and crisis mortality. It lays bare the crucial methodological issues central to the analysis of famine.

Even though it was Peter Laslett who initially (in 1965) drew our attention to the crucial question, 'Did the peasantry really starve?' historiography had to wait for Andrew Appleby who, through his several articles and a book, *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England* (Liverpool and Stanford, 1978), provided a tentative answer—'Yes'. He insisted that famine can only be understood properly when 'it is placed in its social and economic context'. John Walter, Keith Wrightson and David Levine, Paul Slack and Roger Schofield clearly

demonstrate this concern in their articles. Like Appleby, these social scientists rightly emphasise the institutional intervention and social policy, response of traditional community bonds, *mentalities*, and ideologies in coping with dearth, disease, famine and crisis mortality in England and France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was these 'interventions' which cushioned the poor from the adverse effects of the crisis. These articles make us think afresh the Indian scene ruptured with several devastating famines and droughts in the eighteenth, nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

Like David Arnold (*Famine, Social Crisis and Historical Change*, Basil Blackwell, 1988), Wrightson and Levine in their article on 'Death in Whickham' (pp 129–65) draw our attention to social differentiation and the susceptibility of only certain social groups to subsistence crises. After describing the rapid social transformation under the impact of coal trade and a greater vulnerability to famine, the 'structural parameters' within which 'the people of the parish lived and died' (pp 132–38, 141–56 and 165), Wrightson and Levine highlight the manner in which the inhabitants of Whickham come to terms with the realities of death (pp 156–64). They evolved 'a complex of attitudes, values and "rituals of inclusion" which enabled the parishioners to cope on individual, familial, and community levels with both the emotional trauma and the social disturbance occasioned by death' in other words, 'a communal culture of death' (p 163) or a 'corporate culture of death' (p 164).

John Walter's article on the 'social economy of dearth' in England (pp 75–128) highlights the link between harvest failures and heightened mortality (pp 85–6), peasantry's 'mechanisms of defence' against the frequent harvest failures (pp 93–106), and the powerful 'shield' offered by the grain payments during the period of crisis (p 102). He argues that the 'Mental beliefs, moral pressures, magisterial directives and the menace of popular discontent all conspired to encourage the "better off" to assist their poorer neighbours' (p 111). Through 'charity' the local elites, in fact, strengthened the 'myth of united community' and 'disguised' the 'expanding inequalities'. 'The poor were encouraged to choose the solidarities of "community" against those of class' (p 128). Paul Slack (pp 167–87), like Walter, shows a constant exertion of ideological pressure for institutional and social intervention, and the crucial importance of grain wages in escaping the crisis. He skilfully synthesises the recent historiography on the disappearance of the Plague. Roger Schofield's article (pp 279–304) on the other hand analyses the process of fertility response to changing economic conditions as mirrored in the evolving new ideology and value system, pattern of new 'family formation' and fertility control. For Schofield the 'economic development and demographic behaviour are powerfully mediated by social ideology' (p 292).

Among the other articles, E A. Wrigley's seminal contribution (pp 235–78) is a detailed study of the relationship between corn yields and

grain prices in pre-industrial economies. He draws our attention to the importance of distinction between net and gross output in relation to price (see Table 7.2). Wrigley also shows a wider variation in net yields and food availability which made the small farmer vulnerable while strengthening the large-scale farmer. While the role of famine in mortality crisis is the central theme of Jacques Dupaquier's rather tightly written article (pp. 189–99), market integration and geography of mortality in France is the theme of David R. Weir's article (pp. 201–34). Interestingly, Dupaquier argues that 'the weather was not the only cause of the mortality crises, epidemic diseases, probably accompanied by epizootic and fungus infections, were also at work' (p. 197). A surprise however is his hypothesis that the difference between England and France lay in their differential 'organisation of the market' (p. 199). This goes against the complex arguments advanced by the others in this volume.

This book is most rewarding reading for those who want to use diversified data—for instance the innovative use of grain prices in markets and burials in parish registers to understand the crisis mortality—to discern an underlying pattern behind famine, disease, dearth and death in human societies. Our aim in the review is only to draw the attention of the Indian scholars toward this valuable interdisciplinary work, for this is indispensable reading for those who are working on famine, disease and crisis mortality. As Peter Laslett puts it: 'To know how far people did fear illness and premature extinction is to know something of profound importance about any society. Such knowledge is as significant to a society's ideological and political life as it is to its economies, although far and away its greatest significance is for the ordinary, everyday life of ordinary people' (p. xii).

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BOOK REVIEW

In Search of Fundamentals

Walter Moore, *Schrodinger Life and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp 513 pp , price 25 pounds

Einstein once said, 'Equations are more important to me, because politics is for the present, but an equation is something for eternity' Erwin Schrodinger whose name is inextricably linked with the wave equation of quantum mechanics has ensured for himself a pride of place in the history of physics. A biography of one who makes an abiding contribution to human knowledge evinces interest for several reasons. Since there are no general laws explaining the mechanism of creativity by men of genius, a study that provides an insight into any specific case of creativity, enriches one's understanding of the process of growth of human knowledge itself. Moreover, it is a sobering thought to realise that even the exceptionally brilliant people live like normal human beings with their prejudices and tragedies, loves and hates, intrigues and psychological stresses of daily living. The monumental biography of Erwin Schrodinger by Walter Moore is rewarding reading on all these counts. Details of Schrodinger's personal life as also his scientific work are scrupulously detailed in this interesting biography.

In 1911, Erwin Schrodinger graduated from Vienna University which was still steeped in the traditions of Doppler and Boltzmann and the whole spirit of the classical age in physics. Mach and Avenarius whose phenomenology never accepted the reality of atoms in opposition to Boltzman were his favourite philosophers as a student, his interest in philosophy was so intense that he even considered giving up physics to pursue philosophy. A thorough reading of Schopenhauer led him to the philosophy of Vedanta of which he remained a life long believer and never wavered in this belief. By 1925, at the age of 38 (considered no longer young for the kind of break through he made), he was a professor of the Zurich University and addressed himself to the most basic question posed by the physics of the day, 'What is the structure of the atom, and how do the electrons travel in it?'

Prior to the 'wonderful explosion of creativity in his discovery of wave mechanics', Schrodinger was thinking about particles as waves. Following Louis de Broglie's famous discovery that every particle has

a wave length and frequency (this discovery was to extend wave particle duality from light to matter), Schrodinger made the bold hypothesis that any motion of a particle is always similar to the phenomenon of wave propagation. The psi-function of the differential equation of Schrodinger represents the motion of the electron in the atom. The paper written in the beginning of 1926, 'Quantization as an Eigenvalue Problem', 'has been universally recognised as one of the greatest achievements of twentieth-century physics. As Dirac was to remark later, it contains much of physics and in principle, all of chemistry. By 1960, more than 100000 papers had appeared based on application of the Schrodinger equation. From the beginning, it was accepted as a mathematical tool of unprecedented power in dealing with the problems of the structure of matter. And almost from the beginning, scientists began to ponder and worry and argue about what it might be telling them about the nature of the physical world' (p. 205).

With Schrodinger's discovery a peculiar situation had arisen in physics when two systems of quantum mechanics based on diametrically opposed conceptions had been evolved independently. Heisenberg's matrix mechanics maintained that the electron was a particle while Schrodinger's wave mechanics held that the electron had wave properties. When experiments confirming both wave and particle properties of the electron were performed, the dilemma was further confounded. In 1927 Schrodinger proved the mathematical equivalence of the wave and matrix mechanics signifying that the initial premises of the two systems—the concept of the electron as a particle in matrix mechanics and as wave in wave mechanics—were both true.

In 1927 Max Born proposed that *matter waves* are simply *probability waves* and the probability of finding an electron at any point is given by the square of the wave function. This probability interpretation of the psi-function which is now almost universally accepted, remained an anathema to Schrodinger till the very end of his life and he untiringly but unsuccessfully worked to expurgate it from physics. He was of course in the distinguished company of Einstein whose famous statement 'God does not play dice' sums up his position.

Because of Schrodinger's classicism, his biographer Moore describes him as a 'reluctant revolutionary'. Schrodinger, like Einstein never could reconcile to the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum mechanics. His biographer notes, 'It was ironic that by choosing to be a conservative in physics after the revolution of 1926, Schrodinger joined the radical minority who dared to dissent from an orthodoxy known as the Copenhagen Interpretation'. Perhaps no simplified explanation can be proffered to the origin of Schrodinger's opposition to the Copenhagen Interpretation. Moore notes 'A persuasive case can be made that at this time (1926) Erwin was a disciple of Mach in his epistemology, (he was to criticise positivism later), of Vedanta in his ontology, but a follower of Boltzmann in his scientific methodology,

Thus he demanded that a scientific theory provide pictures of reality in space and time, but he did not believe that the pictures portrayed a real world. He had a much more complex and subtle view of the world than the simplistic positivism of Gottingen and Copenhagen, but in 1925-26 he was creating new science at such an unbelievable pace that he had no time to consider the philosophical implications of his own creations. This is not to say that he was unaware of them, but for the time being at least, they would have to remain latent. Schrodinger articulated his position in the following words: 'Bohr's standpoint, that a space-time description is impossible, I reject *à limine*. Physics does not consist only of atomic research, science does not consist only of physics, and life does not consist only of science. The aim of atomic research is to fit our empirical knowledge concerning it into our other thinking. All of this other thinking, so far as it concerns the outer world, is active in space and time. If it cannot be fitted into space and time, then it fails in its whole aim and one does not know what purpose it really serves.'

Apart from the famous wave equation of his, Schrodinger's name for the laity is also associated with the 'Cat Paradox' and his abiding adherence to the philosophy of Vedanta. One of the popular books on quantum mechanics is by John Gribbin, titled *In Search of Schrodinger's Cat, Quantum Physics and Reality* (Corgi Books, 1985).

The famous cat paradox of Schrodinger is an ingenious attempt to restore the space-time description to atomic phenomena and counter the completely idealist interpretation of atomic phenomena where the fact of observation, cognition and therefore consciousness determined the nature of reality. In his own words: 'One can even construct quite burlesque cases. A cat is shut up in a steel chamber, together with the following diabolical apparatus (which one must keep out of the direct clutches of the cat): in a Geiger tube there is a tiny mass of radioactive substance, so little that in the course of an hour *perhaps* one atom of it disintegrates, but also with equal probability not even one, if it does happen, the counter responds and through a relay activates a hammer that shatters a little flask of prussic acid. If one has left this entire system to itself for an hour, then one will say to himself that the cat is still living, if in that time no atom has disintegrated. The first atomic disintegration would have poisoned it. The psi-function of the entire system would express this situation by having the living and the dead cat mixed or smeared out (pardon the expression) in equal parts.'

'It is typical of such cases that an uncertainty originally restricted to the atomic domain has become transformed into a macroscopic uncertainty, which can then be resolved through direct observation. This inhibits us from accepting in a naive way a "blurred model" as an image of reality. There is a difference between a shaky or not sharply focused photograph and a photograph of clouds and fogbanks.'

Not many commentators could defend the uncompromising idealist position that the cat is neither alive nor dead until human observer

has looked into the box and recorded the fact in human consciousness. The cat paradox was thus useful as an antidote to the view that the wave function refers not to a physical model but to human knowledge about an object.

Notwithstanding his total opposition to the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum physics and his scathing criticism of the positivist philosophy of science, Schrodinger's biographer points out, 'From his time as a young man in cold and hungry wartime Vienna, when he delved deep into the Upanishads, through his years of great scientific accomplishment, to his situation as a philosopher on the verge of old age, Schrodinger had never deviated from a religious understanding of our mysterious world' (p. 438).

Scientists working in the frontier areas of their disciplines do come to the conclusion that there is no distinction between physics and metaphysics. Finding themselves in the Socratic dilemma 'the more you know, the less you know', enthralled by the infinitely inexhaustible process of cognition, the response of the scientist is determined by a whole gamut of complex factors including personal predilections and familiarity with contemporary thought. But Schrodinger's metaphysical world-view is prior to his involvement in the frontier areas of research. He held the view that 'physics provides no answers to philosophical questions'. His biographer observes, 'It is not known that his belief in Vedanta ever influenced his actions as distinct from his philosophical writings, and he also kept this belief scrupulously separated from his work in theoretical physics, even from his interpretation of wave mechanics'. Discussing in detail the popular works of Schrodinger, *My View of the World* and *What is Life*, Moore says, 'Erwin, however, never allowed his distrust of Maya to inhibit his enjoyment of its illusory pleasures. He found happiness in his intellectual work, the companionship of friends, good wine, poetry and drama, the love of women, and explorations of mountains and seashores. In these ways also he resembled his mentor Schopenhauer, who was able to combine a pessimism about the world with an indulgence in its pleasures, and an almost paranoid misogyny with an ardent pursuit of fair women' (p. 176).

Schrodinger displayed rare strength of character and fortitude that led to his decision to leave Berlin in the heyday of Nazism. His dislike of Nazism was quite well known. His biographer notes, 'His manner of leaving his important Berlin position was like a slap in the face of the regime, even though he made no overt political statement, the Nazis recognised him as an enemy'.

Schrodinger's collection of philosophical essays titled *Mind and Matter* published in 1958 has him quote Carl Jung approvingly. 'All science is a function of the soul, in which all knowledge is rooted. The soul is the greatest of all cosmic wonders, it is the *conditio sine qua non* of the world as an object. It is remarkable that Western mankind, with a few exceptions, has accorded so little value to this fact. The flood of

external objects of cognizance has made the subject of all cognizance withdraw into the background, and often into apparent nonexistence'

The epistemological optimism that led Schrodinger to search for a unified field theory was severely limited by the conservative and negative tendency of idealist substantiation of mystical beliefs. In his world view the inexhaustibility of cognition was sought to be overcome by religious views. It is of course not possible to find a rational resolution to the contradiction of cognition in such a world-view, but the philosophical questions raised by Schrodinger and other idealistically inclined philosophers provide an opportunity to deepen the materialist philosophy. As Lenin noted, ' "Matter disappears" means that the limit within which we have hitherto known matter disappears and that our knowledge is penetrating deeper '

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SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Education Old and New—A Perspective Badri Raina	4
The New Education Policy and the Teachers' Movement Interview with M.M.P. Singh	15
Autonomy for Whom? Sumeet Sarkar	27
Attending an Orientation Course Nivedita Menon and Saswati Sengupta	34
Humanities: Who Needs Them Anyway? Alok Rai	39
Science Teaching and Research and the New Education Policy Interview with Kamal Dutta	49
Equity and Excellence: Issues in Indian Education Geetha B. Nambissan and Poonam Batra	56
The New Dispensation and School Education—the Limits of Development without Democratisation N. Subramanian and Rashmi Paliwal	74
Entrance Examinations: Iniquitous Instrument K. Ramakrishnan	86
Distant Learning and Distancing the Learner Anita Rampal	96
Book Reviews	100

196-197

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Introduction

The Government of Rajiv Gandhi has shown exceptional determination and consistency in its efforts to remodel education. The New Education Policy, announced in 1986, found its first major manifestation next year, when linkage between a much-delayed payrise for college and university teachers and retrogressive changes in their service conditions provoked an all-India teachers' strike. Since then, a whole series of innovations have been implemented, or announced. Model Navodaya schools for a minority in the countryside is accompanied by an emphasis upon vocational, non-formal or audio-rural 'distance' education method for the less-fortunate 39 out of 64 million new entrants. Plans are well-advanced to entirely scrap the present structure of affiliating universities. In its place instead, we are going to have 'autonomous' departments in universities and 'autonomous' colleges under a centralized Accreditation and Assessment Council. National qualifying tests have been introduced for research scholars and college teachers, the UGC is trying to impose a 40 hour week in colleges, huge sums are being spent on orientation/refresher courses, and a highly anti-democratic Hospitals and Other Institutions Bill banning strikes remains pending before Parliament.

In the present special number of *Social Scientist*, ten contributors take a close look at various aspects of Indian education and the ways in which it is being restructured. We begin with Badri Raina offering a brief historical survey. An interview with MMP Singh, President of the Delhi University Teachers' Association, reviews government policies and the phases, perspectives and responsibilities of the all-India teachers' movement. This is followed by an analysis, of the implications of the 'autonomy of which so much is being heard nowadays, and a case-study of an orientation course by two teachers, who recently had the 'privilege' of the attending it. Alok Rai, and Kamal Datta expose the perspectives before humanities and science teaching. The elitist implications of the New Education Policy on school education are examined by Geetha Nambissan and Poonam Batra. Two activists from the *Ekalavya* group of Madhya Pradesh present fascinating details about the functioning of village schools, and review the possibilities and limits of the work of volunteer groups. The biases of the 'objective' type examinations are brought out by K.

Ramakrishnan We end with a critical look, by Anita Rampal, at 'distance education'

It is not the contention of any of our contributors that existing educational structures should, or indeed can, be left unchanged. The point is that the changes being pushed through seem likely to make things worse. Thus the virtual abandonment of the ideal of universal schooling, implicit in the Novodaya/non-formal bifurcation, is bound to make education even less democratic. Such elitism, Kamal Datta argues, would be disastrous particularly for natural sciences precisely the domain often assumed to be inherently somewhat elitist. Again, the equation of knowledge with information—through gadget-based distance education 'distancing the learner' (Anita Rampal), for instance, or quiz type qualifying tests for research scholars and teachers—is unlikely to raise intellectual standards or promote creative thinking. The contributors also highlight the broader implications of the proposed changes, their linkages with overall political and economic trends. The connections with authoritarian tendencies are fairly obvious—an authoritarianism that seeks to extend itself precisely through forging unmediated direct connections between the centralized bureaucracy and a multitude of oligarchically-constituted 'autonomous' units. A parallel with the recent panchayat bill suggests itself, and MMP Singh has also emphasized the interconnections between educational changes and current shifts in government economic policies. Struggle for a healthier educational system thus becomes inseparable from broader democratic movements: it cannot be effectively fought or won in isolation.

No collection of articles can hope to adequately cover all aspects of the educational scene of a sub-continent. Our special number would have served its purpose if it stimulates further debate, in the pages of *Social Scientist* or elsewhere. One vital problem, touched on by MMP Singh in his interview but requiring further exploration, is the extent of teachers' responsibility for the present educational malaise and what teachers' organizations could do about it. Several contributors have elaborated the linkages between the New Education Policy and the current Indian political scene. But a crucial aspect not adequately focussed here is the way in which 'autonomy' could encourage a variety of sectional fissiparous tendencies: vested interests among denominational groups have been advocating such autonomy for years. Social scientists (particularly historians) could contribute much to a further discussion of the influence of communal mentalities over the whole process of production and reproduction of knowledge and culture in India today. Inputs are needed also from research institutes, centers of engineering and technical education, school-teachers, and students.

All but two of our articles come from Delhi—a limitation that the educational team tried, but failed, to overcome. Regional variations in the educational scene are extremely vital. They often lead to varied responses to the New Education Policy, as indicated perhaps, by the

fate of the all-India teachers' strike of 1987. Bureaucratization of education had then proved a powerful rallying-cry for teachers in Delhi. It probably had less appeal in regions where such official control was not a new threat, but a fact of life for years. There is also a fairly underspread feeling that educational standards in most places have become so abysmal that centrally-planned and managed intervention is the only way out or at least seen as a lesser evil. The debate about educational reform thus gets linked up with much broader issues: for the extent to which progress can or should be achieved in centralized, technocratic ways, has become a central theme for discussion today in advanced capitalist, third world, and socialist countries alike.

Sumit Sarkar
(On behalf of editorial team for special issue)

BADRI RAINA*

Education Old and New—A Perspective

When Dronacharya demanded of the untouchable, Eklavya, his right hand thumb as *Guṛu Dakshina* he was, after all, vindicating the truth of the Marxian maxim that the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class. In claiming that the cruel punishment had been visited on Eklavya not on account of his lowly social position but the fact that he had stolen knowledge, the Guru, wittingly or unwittingly, only further reinforced the materialist view of knowledge as privileged though stealable property. In that age of the epic, it was unthinkable that the socially outcast, however endowed, should be so equipped as to offer challenge to the powers of the entrenched. Something similar applies to the story of Karn—the denial to him of the right to call Arjun to account in arms on the legitimising ground of the inequality of station, and his liquidation subsequently by treachery at the politic behest of no less than the Lord himself. Let us also remember that Ram, the quintessence of virtues, did not think twice in decapitating Sambook, the meditating Shudra in Valmiki's *Ramayana*, and to the consistency of the same Marxian historical truth. Power, then centred in Brahmunical *Presence* and the incantatory magic of Vedic mantras, was not for sharing with the lower orders. And the most numerous among the lower orders, women, had especially to be excluded from Sanskrit learning if hierarchy and division of labour had to be maintained. Recall that as late as the latter half of the nineteenth century Ramabai Pandita's entire *Chitpawan* Brahmin household in Pune was mercilessly ostracized because her enlightened father took it into his dangerous head to impart Sanskrit learning first to his wife and then to his famous daughter who, after all, had to convert to Christianity to find an emancipatory platform outside the dominant, patriarchal Hindu fold. That the firebrand nationalist Tilak was to be abusive of her, and that even the reformer Ranade was to desert her tells us something instructive about the ways in which education as a supposedly autonomous archive has had to struggle against power-structures that perpetuate the myth of autonomy from time to time but always know better. There is perhaps no better illustration of this than is provided by the sad story of that first

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potential Indian science, *Ayurved*. Debi Prasad Chattopadhyay has shown us how *Ayurved* was systematically thwarted, decanonised, excommunicated by the Brahminical authority structure because it did not place causality in *Karm*, nor cure in priestly intervention, but within an analysable and verifiable matrix of materiality.¹ To this day, long after allopathy, *Ayurved* remains the Shudra among the Vedas.

Thus, every education policy from the beginning of historical time in all hierarchical and class societies has been much more than an education policy. All such policies have aimed either at consolidating existent structures of dominance, or at forging with the perceived requirements of the ruling classes. It is another matter, of course, that almost without fail such enterprises yield in turn countering structures of resistance, causing transformations without which history as a dynamic event cannot be conceived. Not that this is always a comforting, linear, positivist occurrence; often, in moving onward history falls among deflections, zig-zags, regressions, but move it does. So that an epistemology of struggle is not merely a wishful chumera to keep social hope alive; its justification lies in the totality of the historical process—now sluggish, halted, hopeless but under our very eyes breaking out in battle to new vistas of endeavour and social reconstruction.

When Hastings gave his blessings to a system of *Gurukuls* and *Madrassahs* he was only keeping in place a civil formation that had the most to offer John Company. It kept the two religious orders in helpful contention, and it encouraged the hegemony of secrets of the very complicated indigenous land revenue system.² Further, an 'orientalist' direction in education consolidated the myth of a transhistorical, mystical India quite above the mundane and murky concerns of trade and materiality, which mundane concerns the Company benevolently took upon itself to plough and to profit by. The story is indeed too well-known to need belabouring. Classicism was thus patronized as an archive of received truths that made history a matter of subsidiary importance in the colony. That not every orientalist had a cognition matching such a historical fall-out is true enough. Yet, it is hardly the purity of individual exertions that history makes its epistemological object. There cannot but have been well-meaning people who *believed* Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian education to be the *sumum bonum* of attainment, incidentally best restricted to the endowed social groups alone (after all, Plato had a vision of guardianship as well); and yet another, admittedly less favourable, nomenclature for all such 'felt' perceptions, however nobly held, is ideology. And all ideology is pregnant with consequences.

And precisely because the dynamics of history constantly reformulates interests and ideologies, orientalist education had to yield place to English education in 1837. Suddenly, full in the face of the brotherhood of Jones, Wilkes, Wilson and others Macaulay could

assert that a single shelf of European books was superior to all the learning in Sanskrit and Arabic. And that he could say this without a knowledge either of Sanskrit or of Arabic suggests that the impetus for the historic policy change lay not in education but elsewhere. Owing to a combination of exigencies, it became necessary for the colonizers to generate a qualitatively new civil society in India. As the administrative costs of running the colony became unacceptable, the British had to have on hand an English language-knowing low-order native bureaucracy, the famous or infamous 'babu' breed. English language soon led to the import of English literature, sold now as *the* repository of stable human wisdom, and a nicely secular substitute for the troublesome Bible. The Derozians, the Brahmos, and others across the colony, justly suspicious of the regressive social and political load of orientalist education, were happily to swallow the new hegemony, both as a supposedly 'modernizing' event and as an avenue to enhanced personal status. As we know, the modernisation came only as cultural fad bereft of any progressive economic or democratic content (in fact, as camouflage to a rapacious colonial industrial policy), even as sections of the newly minted urban middle classes became admirers of empire for decades to come.

The day could not but come when Anglicist education produced an awareness antagonistic to its hegemonic designs. The new native elites, products of the universities in the three metropolitan Presidencies, became wise to the hiatus between the purported content of English Liberalism and its actual practice in the colony. Thus three distinct counter-hegemonic impulses took shape: one was to ask of the colonizers that they match precept with practice within the claims of their own ideological state apparatus; a second was to go native in full revivalist colour for forging a national identity, a third sought for such identity formation within a reformed native matrix. The Indian Association became the precursor of the Indian National Congress. By the turn of the century, the three universities set up in 1858 as a consequence of the recommendations of Wood's despatch of 1854 came to be seen as the breeding grounds of an anti-colonial consciousness. Consequently, the Education Commission of 1902 appointed by that rank imperialist, Curzon, made new recommendations that remind us rather ominously of the central political thrust of our own New Education Policy of 1987. The commission stated: 'In all matters relating to higher education, efficiency must be the first and paramount consideration. It is better for India that a comparatively small number of young men should receive a sound liberal education than that a large number should be passed through an inadequate course of instruction leading to a depreciated degree' (Raleigh Commission Report, 1902, p.14). Curzon's undemocratic and severely restrictive injunctions in the matter of higher education and the new official controls on grants-in-aid and affiliation were to be the panicked expression of a colonialism at siege.³

As political independence came in 1947 the new need to translate such an attainment into 'economic independence' and an 'effective democracy'—all this no doubt on class lines—led, among other things, to the establishment of the first University Education Commission in 1948.⁴ It would seem that the major thrust of the report of this Commission was to refashion higher education in particular as an ideological support to parliamentary democracy. The report said: 'We know what Hitler did in six years with the German youth. The Russians are clear in their minds about the kind of society for which they are educating and the qualities required in their citizens. Our education system must find its guiding principle in the aims of the social order for which it prepares' (p. 19). Thus, the Commission expressed itself broadly along a two-pronged strategy: one, the 'urgent need for technicians' who would 'ensure a continuous flow of skilled workers for several modern industries' (pp. 59-60), and, two, the need to 'emphasize the humanities in order to furnish a continuing tradition of liberalism of the acquired colonial variety—this latter couched in the language of the 'spirit': 'If we wish to bring about a savage upheaval in our society, a *raksasa raj*, all that we need to do is to give vocational and technical education and starve the spirit' (p. 66). We recall that Matthew Arnold and others of his ilk were rather similarly alarmed at the prospect of an indiscriminate spread of scientific education among the lower orders. Thus, the needs of the new ruling classes were articulated along two distinct axes. One kept in mind the necessity to draw large numbers into the productive process (something that led to the recommendation of the mother tongue as 'medium of instruction throughout the secondary school stage'—p.226); the other provided the super-structural wherewithal to keep in place an English-educated guardian class at the controlling echelons of the State machinery.

By the 1960s certain disquieting trends were in evidence. Whatever the requirements of the masses may have been, education was seen to have expanded too rapidly, especially at the higher levels. Somewhere, it was a process that was perceived to have contributed to the political reverses and 'disorientation' of the decade leading to the formation of the SVD governments in many states. The Kothari Commission of 1968 was thus to make, at least in part, Curzon-like recommendations. While it reiterated the Constitutional injunction about free and compulsory education upto age 14 and spoke of increased outlays for education, it also advised the curtailment of higher education. Predictably, the State took over only such of the recommendations that suited it—the three-language formula, the notion of the centres of excellence, strict provisions as to the governance of the universities, and so on. The Gajendragadkar Commission that followed on the heels of the Kothari Commission sealed the new centralising thrust in the governance of universities; its recommendations about the appointment of Vice-Chancellors and the structure and composition of university senates were quickly

implemented since these gave the State greater control of higher education. This authoritarian restructuring was formalized during the Emergency when education was transferred from the State to the Concurrent List. The Janata government sought to tailor the education system to the Draft Education Policy of 1978, suggesting 'non-formal' education along Gandhian principles chiefly for village communities, while keeping in place private and State-funded higher education for the urban elite. It also for the first time introduced in parliament the Hospitals and Other Institutions Bill (1979) so as to curb what it saw as potentially dangerous trade union and other undesirable political orientations among teachers, doctors and others whom a convenient Supreme Court judgment deemed not to be covered by the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act.

II

What of the New Education Policy-1986? Thanks to the government's own documents, the infrastructural detail on which the policy grounds its ideological diagnoses and proposals are by now well-known. In this, the document *Challenge of Education—A Policy Perspective* is indeed a most commendable confession. For a start, the document admits with candour that the single major reason for the phenomenal drop-out rate at the school stage (implying thereby the failure of all previous policy implementation) is 'poverty': '96 per cent of children who never attended schools and 84 per cent of the drop-outs come from families whose annual income is less than Rs.4000.' Further, the bulk of this population 'come from families whose occupations are agriculture and labour' (para 4.5.2. Ch.1, Vol.II). Having admitted that hard truth, the thrust of the policy perspective is not so to integrate education with developmental goals as to alleviate poverty and produce equity, but, assuming the sad fact of 'poverty' as an unchangeable given, to go on to frame education for those that are not poor and will not drop out. The ideological matrix within which the New Education Policy takes shape is in part quite eloquently Carlylean; we remember how anxious Carlyle was (in writing on the French Revolution) that unless some minimal alleviation of the condition of England were effected by the British ruling class in the 1830s the French revolution could not but happen in England as well. *Challenge of Education* worries unashamedly along the same self-serving lines; to wit, if by the time the country enters the '21st century' 55 percent of the world's illiterates are Indians then such creatures will not but be 'millstones' around the 'necks' of the 'more happily placed.' Therefore, 'to do nothing is to invite tensions beyond the control of the law and order machinery' (para 3.9). Visions of Arnoidean 'anarchy' loom large; hence in order to ensure that social unrest remains within the ambit of the 'law and order machinery' the Indian ruling classes must at least be seen to be making some minimal gesture. Such a course becomes particularly

pressing in view of the rapacity of the 'national' (read 'class') goals which inform the overall politics of the New Education Policy 'it is not a matter of seeing how many people are employed and how many are not employed, but what is the productivity for a given investment' (the Prime Minister in a Conference of State Education Ministers—August, 1985) This 'developmental' direction of course flows rather straightforwardly from the recommendations of the World Bank slated to apply to developing countries, India included 'the development of upper levels of formal education will be selective and carefully planned, taking into account the limited absorptive capacity of the modern sector for labour, and the needs of both public and private sector for managerial and technical skills to meet the needs of increasingly sophisticated economies will have priority' (Education Sector Policy Paper—April, 1980, p 87) Another somewhat more mysterious document from abroad will show how the entire blue-print of the NEP with regard to higher education was in hand with the Government of India *prior* to the first of its own public formulations Of that later.

The *Challenge* document provides a fairly outspoken critique of erstwhile educational policy and practice, this critique, however, is not offered on the side of a truly national equity but with a view to the changed requirements of the ruling class Let us look at the contradictions between the direction in which some of the statistics the document furnishes points to and the actual decisions taken For example, within the general argument that the government must take hard decisions in regard to fund allocations if education is to be righted at ground levels, the document computes that for attaining universal literacy (free and compulsory education upto age 14 no longer being talked about) Rs 25,000 crores need to be set aside for the year 1990-91 at 1980-81 prices⁵ Staggering as this seems, it works out to only around 6 per cent of the overall seventh plan outlay, precisely the level of investment that the Kothari Commission has recommended as a minimum in 1968 Yet, the plan document reveals that for the entire plan period ending 1990-91 the allocation is to be Rs 4775.3 crores for general education, including adult education Of this amount elementary education receives only 1830.45 crores When indices of projected population growth over the period are taken into account, this statistics will leave around 60 million students outside the schooling system. Over the five-year plans the share of education in the total public sector outlay has declined from 7.3 per cent in the first plan to 2.5 per cent in the seventh. And the bulk of this depleted allocation has been earmarked for model schools and centres of excellence'

The *Challenge* document admits that 'the proportion of GNP spent on education in many countries ranged around six to eight per cent' (para 2.32); most Indian states spend from ten to twenty five per cent on education. In West Bengal, for instance, education is free upto class XII

Uniforms, mid-day meals, text books and stationery are provided free to the school-going children. As a result, enrolment there has shot up. The state has registered the highest increase in the enrolment of girls since independence. The total allocation for education in the state is 25 per cent. Clearly, West Bengal provides evidence for the fact that funding on education and particular kinds of political will go hand in hand.

Despite all the rhetoric about education to the people, the NEP seeks at bottom to emulate the Jeffersonian principle. Jefferson, in arguing for a 'more general diffusion of knowledge' (1779) had really in mind preparing two sorts of civil societies, the 'labouring and the learned,' so that a tiered system could effectively disengage 'a few geniuses from the rubbish.' Quite simply, in offering 'non-formal' and 'distance' education to the 'rubbish' the new policy seeks to cut down 95 per cent of the current expenditure on education constituted by teacher's salaries, to legitimise child labour, to remove the 'potentially subversive interaction between the teacher and the taught, and to leave enough investment for the production of the geniuses that the State now requires for the fulfilment of its economic goals.

The *Challenge* document argues that vocationalisation has failed in India because of 'cultural prejudice towards skill-oriented education' (para 4.30). The fact, however is that vocationalisation has failed because the economy has shown little capacity to create any commensurate employment. The registered educated unemployed in India, an appalling 112 lakhs, constitute but a fraction of the total educated unemployed. The reality is that given the transformed manpower needs of a capital intensive economy vocationalisation cannot but be further restricted if labour is to be contained to minimal limits. The new policy, in true Malthusian terms, blames the unemployed for unemployment, or the educational system for producing too many unemployables. The point of the attack indeed lies elsewhere. A large body of the educated unemployed (as opposed to the uneducated unemployed) presents a threat of a very different order. Educated unemployment tends to have a direct equation with an enhanced social and political awareness; hence the baseless war-cry that higher education in India has crossed acceptable quantitative limits. This hysteria is totally repudiated by the statistics supplied by the *Challenge* document itself. Whereas in 1981 even developing countries had between ten to thirty five graduates per hundred of population, the corresponding Indian figure was a measly 3.12 (para 2.2.1. Ch V, Vol II). Likewise, where the Philippines, South Korea, Japan (models for the new economic thinking) had 25 per cent, 18 per cent and 30 per cent of the relevant age group (17-23 years) enrolled in higher educational institutions, the Indian figure was a lowly 4.8 per cent (para 2.4). And, yet, in the face of the Government's own statistics, backed up by the obliging voices of influential educational busy-bodies, we are told that there is overcrowding in Indian higher education.

It is just as well to recognise, therefore, that the New Education Policy is not just a policy about education, it is really an aspect of the State's new economic thinking. Put simply, an Indian State that under the overall direction of international monetary institutions and multinational interests seeks to launch a capital-intensive and consumerist economy requires a crucially altered 'human resource' infrastructure and fund allocation pattern. The policy documents thus everywhere acknowledge that the goal of education can no longer be education. The last thing the State now needs are communities of people brought up to think critically—indeed, to think at all. What it does need are 'resource persons' who can be fitted into slots and trusted to carry out 'tasks' and achieve 'targets' previously laid out by the controlling economic elite. The package is sought to be grounded now in the ideological supposition that hard technology carries an 'objective' status not amenable to debate, an occurrence that reminds us of the way in which eighteenth century reason as an open-ended cognitive methodology gave way in Europe to a positivist science in the nineteenth century after its alliance with Capital.⁶ Having said that the current 'national' economic ideas are drawn from international agencies, it should hardly be any surprise that the new 'national' thinking in education equally comes to us from abroad (Canada and Japan being explicitly mentioned as paradigms in the government's 'Concept Paper' on 'Accreditation and Assessment Council'—December, 1987). It is time then to disclose a rather little-known fact. This concerns a document titled 'Memorandum on Indian Higher Education' dated 19 February, 1986, that is months before the new policy was unleashed.⁷ The Memorandum is addressed to 'The Prime Minister's Office,' no less. 'The Problem' it tackles is defined thus: 'to assess the pros and cons of separating colleges and universities in India, and ending the college affiliation system.' The document is signed by one Mr. Paul Flather who describes himself as 'former correspondent of Times Higher Education Supplement, London.' The fact, however, that the document (copy, no doubt) came to us from the local office of the Ford Foundation must put a somewhat less innocuous label on Mr Flather.

It is of course not possible here to reproduce the entire Flather memorandum; but let it be said that it contains very nearly the complete blueprint of the New Education Policy with respect to higher education. Autonomy, disaffiliation, accreditation councils, national assessment teams, discretionary funding to non-viable colleges, the desirability of nurturing colleges such as St. Stephens and Presidency, Calcutta as the nucleus of a potential 'Indian Ivy League', centres of 'excellence', down-playing the humanities and the social sciences, establishing a 'Government's Education Inspectorate,' all this and more finds fairly final formulation in the Flather memorandum. The above memorandum, then, is eloquent testimony to the wholly native and indigenous exertions of our policy makers!

Cutting through the disingenuous froth and verbiage of the policy documents some plain positions emerge. Thus Indian industry which has so far spent no more than a shameful 0.6 per cent of its resources on research and development is now to be provided the low-cost facility of university science departments to conduct sponsored research (improving fluoride content in toothpaste?). Such facilities are to be 'networked' into industrial interests so that useless fundamental science yields place to commercialized technology for the bourgeoisie. Since that is the role envisaged for the universities, it stands to reason that affiliated colleges are a burden and a nuisance, especially where the emphasis is on the humanities and the social sciences which yield no tangible technology or usable consumer items within an exchange economy but, if anything, only gratuitously critical citizens.

The jettisoning of non-viable colleges and universities (viability now a candidly fiscal rather than academic concept) is to be effected through the newly discovered legitimising passion for 'autonomy.' And autonomy is to be granted by a University Grants Commission which lost its own autonomy many years ago, and which is now even more explicitly to be subservient to an Apex Body—a severely centralised command post at the head of the 'pyramid' that will have the power to override any or all of the the UGC's decisions. Autonomous colleges, passed on to private and sectarian interests with not a single elected representative on their governing bodies,⁸ are to seek accreditation from an Accreditation Council whose membership is to be nominated by principals and vice-chancellors from among the ubiquitous tribe of obliging, out-of-work, ex-academics close to the sources of power. And if such an accreditation commissioner were to find a college 'non-viable' for one non-academic reason or another the college will receive no central funding. The policy stipulates with great anguish, no doubt, that where colleges are unable to raise their own resources (by foolishly refusing to levy capitation fees, for example) 'painful decisions' may have to be taken. It is of course nowhere indicated what is to happen to the students, faculty or other staff of colleges that may thus be shut down in mid-stride. And all this is sought to be sold as 'autonomy'.

As to the question how much autonomy teachers are likely to enjoy in autonomous colleges, the Government's own NIEPA review committee report on the functioning of the existing autonomous colleges says all there needs to be said on the subject. The report cites the case of Loyola College where a whole department was summarily wound up by the Management because a new paper the department sought to introduce was seen as being potentially subversive. This in an area of decision-making where we are told faculty Boards of Studies are to have complete jurisdiction, namely, syllabi, pedagogy, and so on. Needless to say, that teachers thus dismissed from 'autonomous' colleges are left without recourse in the new scheme.

There is one other dimension to the situation. This concerns the frustrating potential that various sections of the academic community have demonstrated in recent years to thwart repressive Government policy through collective democratic action. This time the authorities have fully recognised that the new package of regimentation may not pass muster if the democratic and constitutional rights of the academic community are left intact. An inseparable component of the new policy on education is the curbing or denial of such rights. To this end has been resurrected the old and infamous Hospitals and Other Institutions Bill. Already passed by the Rajya Sabha in a shape vastly more repressive than the original text of 1979, the Bill is calculated unashamedly to abrogate the fundamental right under Article 19 of the Constitution to form associations for purposes of collective bargaining.

A word in conclusion. It is strength of the bourgeois-democratic system that the Government's own presentations with respect to the formulation of the NEP have provided the materials for critiquing the policy *per se*. Thus we do recognise that the bureaucracy entrusted with such homework has sometimes both the equipment and the will to call a spade a spade. Perhaps the bureaucracy need not be looked upon as an undifferentiated monolith. One would like to think that much progressive, if not positively radical, potential exists within its ranks, however muted for reasons not far to seek.

It is not our position that the policy as it now stands need wait for a systemic political change for enlightened transformation. Indeed, however much its provisions may benefit the ruling classes in the short term, we do not believe that the long-term fall-out can be conducive to the more enduring interests of the Indian State. Till such time as the latter is relatively autonomous of and above turn to our republican constitution for legitimation, we believe that whether it be economic or educational policy its credentials are best served by an adherence to principles of equity. And the NEP, as has been repeatedly pointed out, is dangerously inequitable. The least that the Indian State as at present constituted can do is to match fraternal bourgeois-democratic States in its attentions to people's education (and not just as slogan or as something merely to be junked into the 'non-formal' stream), in providing at least 10 per cent of GNP to education, in seeking truly a devolution of educational thinking and practice (autonomy as at present proposed being the opposite), in putting teachers and the taught at the centre of academic formulation and decision-making, in offering strong support to languages other than English as media of instruction and testing all the way upto the university level, in increasing enrolment at *all* levels, in allowing the social sciences and the humanities to grow and to become sources of historical critiquing and agents of the suspended social revolution. We believe all this is not only desirable but possible, and, ultimately, supportive rather than antagonistic both to our democratic polity and to economic growth.

14 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Centralising, regimenting and depoliticising education is a sure road to a sick and soulless society

NOTES

- 1 See 'Science and Society in Ancient India,' *Marxism and Indology*, ed., Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, K P Bagchi and Company Calcutta, New Delhi, 1981, pp 231-263
- 2 See Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India A Nineteenth Century Agenda and Its Implications* (K P Bagchi and Company New Delhi and Calcutta, 1988), pp 4-5
- 3 See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (Macmillan India, 1983) pp 105-6, see also S N Mukerji, *History of Education in India Modern Period*, Acharya Book Depot Baroda, 1951, pp 182-195 Mukerji's book is an invaluable mine of detail, even if theoretically innocent
- 4 The 'Universities Education Commission Report', p 411, more popularly known as the Radhakrishnan Commission
- 5 For this computation I am indebted to the monograph *New Education Policy A Cruel Hoax* brought out by the Democratic Teachers' Front, Delhi University, the monograph deserves to be read in full for its analysis of the question
- 6 We recall what Marx wrote about, science becoming 'a productive force distinct from labour and pressed into the service of Capital' (*Capital*, Vol I, p 361) For a discussion of the ideological shift from Reason to Rationality in the nineteenth century and the beginnings of a 'scientific' critique of ideology see Jurgen Habermas, 'Theory and Practice in a Scientific Civilization,' *Critical Sociology* ed., Paul Connerton, Penguin Harmondsworth, England, 1976, pp 330-362
- 7 The government's documents *National Policy on Education* and *Programme of Action* are dated May and August, 1986 respectively
- 8 See *Revised Guidelines on the Scheme of Autonomous Colleges*, University Grants Commission, 1986, see Annexure-III, p 23 and *passim*

INTERVIEW WITH M M P. SINGH*

The New Education Policy and the Teachers' Movement

MMP Singh: Our analysis of education, Government policies, and teachers' movements should have as its central focal point two kinds of interrelated contradictions : between imperialism and the Third World, and between the Indian big bourgeois ruling groups and the Indian people. The struggle to control knowledge and learning processes, to establish domination and hegemony over knowledge, is a crucial part of the ongoing conflicts between imperialist neo-colonialist forces and newly-liberated Third World countries trying to maintain and consolidate their independence. Neo-colonialist penetration is a threat as much, if not more, in the domain of education and culture as in economic life, for control over the learning process and communications has become absolutely central in the contemporary world. Again, education and culture are never independent of class interests, and efforts are made in every country to appropriate them for providing ideological legitimation of ruling groups. Our paradigm for understanding all problems of education, learning processes, and culture must, therefore, begin with the triangle composed by the interests of neo-colonialism, of Indian ruling classes, and of the Indian people.

Many specific teachers' movements might appear purely economic at first sight and this may predominate for certain phases or particular struggles which have overwhelmingly emphasized objectives like higher salaries. But taken as a whole, three phases need to be distinguished in the history of the all-India teachers' movement.

The first stage had been one of local or regional agitations against specific kinds of injustice to redress grievances on what may be termed compassionate lines. From around 1967-69 began a second phase, when the scattered organizations and delegations started developing into mass bodies of teachers through the level of real, as distinct from paper organization achieved varied greatly from region to region. Only in some pockets did teachers' associations become real mass organizations. Agitations in this second phase, which continued till 1984-85, combined redress of specific grievances with the raising,

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occasionally, of some broader policy issues. As a whole, it would not be unfair to call this phase economistic, but the agitation and public debates were raising certain wider questions too. Thus the demand, put forward first by student and later taken up by the teacher organizations, for 10 per cent budget allocation for education raised the issue of budget priorities as between defence on the one hand, and education or public health on the other. Questions of educational governance led up to the implicit conflict between colonial-bureaucratic legacies and democratic forms of managing education. There was also the issue of privatization of education, on which teachers were able to develop a more-or-less united stance. But two serious limitations persisted in this second phase : the very uneven level of organization across states, and a general inability to grasp the linkages between education and overall government policies and peoples' problems and movements in a Third World context.

The third, post-1985, phase, has been dominated by the New Education Policy, which has sought to institutionalize all the negative aspects of post-1947 government policies. What has developed is a systematic offensive, not sporadic bureaucratic aberrations due to the whims of some officials—for the Hospitals and other Institutions. Bill, delinking of colleges from universities, accreditation councils, so-called autonomy, privatization of education, devaluation of degrees and curtailment of higher education, the stress on 'non-formal' methods and 'vocalization' etc., all form parts of a coherent bureaucratic drive. This, again, is integrally related to the capital-intensive developmental strategy of the ruling class, and so the institutionalization of previously scattered negative tendencies, and the introduction of new regressive measures, acquires a larger, anti-people dimension. In economy and education alike the policy shift from labour-to capital-intensive strategies tilts the balance towards the interests of multi-nationals.

Higher education, it is being argued, has become top heavy—yet only 3.5 millions out of 75 millions in the relevant 17-21 age-group get institutional higher education today. Thus a proportion of 4 per cent is being condemned as excessive, and the ground is being cleared for restricting admissions through higher fees (in autonomous colleges, for instance) · even an all-India test for undergraduation entrance has been suggested, while new universities are being discouraged. The future 'surplus' will be channelled into non-formal streams, and even the present 4 per cent entry will get whittled down. As for the related stress on 'vocalization', Government claims and plans in this respect need to be placed in the context of the 40 million population of child labourers in India today. This immense number do not have the chance of going to school, or are forced by poverty to drop out : for them, an enforced 'vocalization' is already the reality, with miserable pay (Rs.50 to 100 a month or so), and inhuman working conditions which make them old people in their twenties. These are facts of life

in bangle industries, in glass manufactures, in garment industries where children stitch on buttons, etc. If the Government is serious about vocationalization, it should make it compulsory for employers to extend education to all child labourers : schools in the mornings, say 2-3 hours paid work in the afternoons. But despite talk about vocationalization for 1-5 years or so, no such law has been made, and education is not mentioned even in the new Government bill on child labour. Abstracted from these grim realities, vocationalization in India has meant mainly a mechanical and formal repetition of the Gandhian slogan of basic education linking up learning with labour. In practice, such basic schools have quickly degenerated into slums in underprivileged areas, while elsewhere they remain no more than decorative and irrelevant additions to the formal curriculum. A 'vocationalization' which ignores the immense numbers in the 7 to 15-16 age-group who are deprived of education, are compulsorily 'vocalionalised' already, and who die early from its benefits, is bound to remain a farce.

Returning to the overall integrated policy offensive which characterizes the post-1985 phase . the teachers' movement has to understand that a focus on salaries and promotions alone is quite inadequate for meeting this qualitatively new situation. The movement as a whole has yet to develop the clarity required to understand the contradictions and complications of this era. Some ask the crude question : can all this be defeated by a strike? Decidedly no—it is impossible to defeat or even resist effectively through teachers' strikes *alone* the concerted policies of an anti-people government. Such an offensive would be difficult to beat back—unless we win the confidence of students, their parents, of the people at large, unless we can integrate our struggle with those of all other democratic forces, unless we work out our tactics in the perspective of national struggles. Open debates are necessary to raise the level of understanding—without this raising of consciousness, we cannot further develop the teachers' movement on positive lines; cannot create a better atmosphere, preconditions or infra-structure for education

We must face the fact that the disarray of the teachers' movement after September 1987 represented a Government victory in dividing us. Today there are five national teachers' organizations or groups. The AIFUCTO still exists, though many associations have left it. There is, secondly, a federation of 42 affiliated university teachers' associations (Patiala, Kumaun, Garhwal, Sagar, Madras, etc). 22 agricultural universities have formed a third federation; there is a separate organization of the IITs; and finally there is a loose coordination among five Central Universities. All these groups cannot be united under the old AIFUCTO banner any longer. A further problem is posed by the 400-odd research institutions, largely unorganized as yet, but a very crucial potential component of any really national-level

resistance against government policies. So the problems facing us are extremely formidable.

Question: Is it not a fact that educational standards as a whole are declining?

The government, no doubt, is utilizing this decline to mount a bureaucratization drive. But if the fact of decline is admitted, how would you differentiate your response to it from that of the government?

MMP Singh : It is incorrect to characterize the present situation in absolute and abstract terms as one of 'general decline'. Decline is seldom to be seen in places like elite colleges in major urban centers—where scientific technological infrastructures, library facilities, financial resources, etc., have been made available. The basic question, in other words, is of extremely uneven facilities : decline is marked mostly in backward and rural areas. So sub-standard education is related to per capita expenditure and general backwardness : it is related to differential government policies, much more than to laziness of teachers or students. A second dimension of decline is connected with the general, and ever-growing, technological-cultural gap between advanced and underdeveloped countries. But global unevenness is being dangerously accentuated in India by internal differentiation. In this context, the sweeping charge that education is declining just because teachers don't teach and students don't study is a bogus one, and solutions based on such a diagnosis are bound to be misplaced.

Question : It is generally accepted that capital-intensive patterns of economic growth are related to scientific and technological developments, and it is also clear that India lags behind in such respects. In this situation, is it not necessary to encourage development by an education geared towards rapid technological growth?

MMP Singh : In India industrialization at the grass-roots has hardly started as yet. Agrarian reforms—its essential pre-requisite—have not been seriously implemented, and so effective demand remains very low because of the abysmal living standards of masses of peasants and agricultural labourers. They cannot even afford exercise books and elementary texts for their children, and we are talking of high-technology! So a simple take-over of the latest capital-intensive foreign technology is no solution for an under-developed country like ours. It only increases unemployment, as computers are doing in certain sectors—and about 6 lakhs of industrial units have closed down since independence, swallowed up by the Indian big bourgeoisie or by multinationals. And a tailoring of education to such priorities, as is being sought for today, would be quite disastrous. This is the real meaning of the recent proposals for autonomous departments in

universities. The new understanding is that any department can choose to collaborate with particular industrial houses directly, modifying accordingly its syllabus, academic planning, research programmes—without any control of university academic or executive councils. Incidentally, the UGC plans to bestow such 'autonomy' to departments, but is it autonomous itself? We all know how many of its own proposals have been overruled by the finance or education ministries, and that it is today no more than a government department. The nice-sounding slogan of autonomy is no more than a device to transfer departments to private industrial houses, who can then pass on their research, and development expenses to the public exchequer.

Question : Does not vocationalization take on a new, perhaps a more positive, meaning in the context of the computer revolution? Is it any longer sufficient to relate it to the Gandhian basic education model alone?

MMP Singh : It is important to distinguish between mastery over general learning processes and the picking-up of isolated skills. Neo-colonialism tries to retain and extend control over the first, and the Indian ruling class emphasis on vocational training fits in neatly with this strategy. Fundamental knowledge-generation will remain the prerogative of developed countries, while we will at best be allowed to pick up isolated skills—which anyway would soon become outdated and irrelevant, as one generation of computers, say, is replaced by the next one. I have already argued that such vocationalization even if geared to high-technology, will not solve unemployment, either—for the handful of new jobs created would be swamped by the new jobless produced by technological obsolescence. Again, introduction of large numbers of vocational courses in universities—as our outgoing Vice-Chancellor has been doing—dilutes the value of universities as centers of knowledge production, creative intellectual endeavour, and dissemination. Knowledge of such kinds can be explosive—that is another main reason why it is being sought to the restricted today.

Question : How would you link up the authoritarian tendencies in the New Education Policy and the overall political context today?

MMP Singh : The government wants to retain and consolidate control in the hands of semi-bureaucratic, semi-private institutions, and so would like to perpetuate ignorance and illiteracy among the property less millions. It tried to distance the people, directly involved in education, above all the teaching community, from any role in policy formulation, and so it seeks to curtail its democratic rights. The broader political context for all this is a crisis in classical bourgeois democracy. The ruling groups are getting increasingly worried about what had been the traditional base of liberal-democratic values in India, the educated

middle class : the social group most interested and involved in education and other liberal institutions. This is clear from the mounting attacks on the judiciary and the press, along with the new policies regarding education. The government seeks a regimental system, which through compartmentalized 'autonomy', would confine protests to purely local levels and not any general policy challenge. The overall purpose is to control, through fragmentation, nation-wide and broad democratic movements.

Question : Couldn't it be argued that the admittedly very uneven academic standards in different parts of the country require some centralized, bureaucratic initiatives? This has been the justification put forward, as you know, for the National Qualifying Test for college teachers being introduced from January 1990.

MMP Singh : The underlying logic here goes back to 1976, when education was transferred from the state to the concurrent list. There have been two different responses to this from academics and the teachers' movement—some (like the CPI in the mid-1970s) offered critical and conditional support to centralization of education as the way for removing local/regional evils, others considered it dangerous and opposed it. Experience has shown, I think, that the second approach was correct.

The harmful consequences of the National Test are clear enough. For a start, it is bound to devalue postgraduate degrees and teaching. Students will start asking their teachers : your lectures and degrees do not equip me for the junior research fellowships, for IAS, and now not even for teaching jobs—for all these I must sit for separate tests, however excellent my postgraduate degree. So why should I bother to attend your classes—particularly in a place like Delhi University, where postgraduate classes don't have compulsory attendance and teachers so long have been attracting students only through the quality and relevance of their lectures. Students will now prefer to attend teaching shops that claim to train directly for competitive examinations (since the new tests for research fellowships and teachers are clearly being modelled on the IAS, prelims) and offer 'sure success' for Rs. 1000 to 2000 or so. The proposed context of the new test for teachers' makes this very clear : the major emphasis will be on general knowledge - IQ and objective-type papers (two out of three), obviously to be modelled on the IAS preliminaries. Competence in your particular discipline and consequent teaching potential is not going to be decisive for lecturership—a general 'quiz culture' will be far more important, the ability to pick up and memorize irrelevant and unconnected bits of 'facts'. This is an utterly absurd test methodology. It may be more-or-less all right for IAS entrance, for administrators are meant to function on the basis of accumulated knowledge spread fairly over a large number of areas, not to evaluate and develop knowledge (which is

possible only through genuine specialization). The requirements for IAS and teaching jobs are fundamentally different and so we must oppose the qualifying test not just because of the centralization of power it implies, but because of its disastrous academic consequences. We already have some indication of the poor quality and academic irrelevance of such tests. In Delhi University, a large number of candidates who have cleared the Junior Research Fellowship qualifying test are being rejected every year by Departments for MPhil or PhD admission.

Question : Are there internal reasons for the post-September 1987 split in the teachers' movement, apart from Government machinations?

MMP Singh : I think the Government role was the primary reason, but there were some secondary causes—and often the primary factor cannot get activated in the absence of secondary reasons. Seeds of conflict had already existed within the teachers' movement. Down to the eve of the all-India strike, the AIFUCTO central leaderships had been largely a formal, paper body—it, 'blessed' through press statements, launched struggles at local or regional levels. The National Executive had no experience of directly leading a struggle or carrying on negotiations. Secondly, basic political/ideological conflicts within the AIFUCTO had been brushed under the carpet, left unresolved, for many years, due to the emphasis upon retaining unity of all sections at any cost. Economism predominated, while the formal, 'blessing-bestowing' nature of the central leadership had permitted a 'command system' of running the AIFUCTO by the general secretary. In any future reunification of the movement through a confederation of the five sections which exist today, we have to be extremely careful about these three secondary reasons for the 1987 debacle. Vigilance would have to be exercised in the constitution and day-to-day working of any new confederation, otherwise we might face similar problems again.

Question : Is not the image of the teacher declining, even in relatively privileged places like Delhi University? And don't teachers also have some direct responsibility for the decline in academic standards?

MMP Singh : Updating and regeneration of knowledge—the basic function of teachers—can only take place in the context of awareness of global and national conflicts over production and dissemination of knowledge. Without such awareness of constant struggle between ruling groups that wish to deprive people of knowledge, and the people who need 'knowledge' a teacher is bound to feel alienated in his job—and such alienation is growing in our profession. The teachers' movement certainly has to do something about this. Degeneration is occurring also because the government and bureaucracy, while talking so much about teachers' accountability and academic standards, often simultaneously

manipulate appointments and pack academics with toadies and corrupt elements. Our task is to become more conscious of what can be done to counter such developments. No organization can grow without overcoming its own weaknesses or appreciating its social responsibilities—otherwise it is bound to degenerate. Its image in society is bound to suffer—today the whole teaching community often pays the price for the weaknesses of particular sections.

Question : Would you like to comment on the significance of the proposed Accreditation Council?

MMP Singh : A basic thrust of the new policy is to break the present affiliation system, delink colleges from universities, and place colleges under an Accreditation Council sponsored by the UGC. The argument that this would raise academic standards has not been tested in any scientific or systematic way. Thus no attempt has been made to examine whether academic standards are really higher in the existing purely postgraduate non-affiliating universities, as compared to affiliating universities. The third model, universities with affiliated colleges but no separate postgraduate teaching (like Agra, till recently) should also have been compared with the other two. Without such rigorous comparative studies (which would also have to keep in mind other differentials like varying per capita expenditure, etc), the superiority of the pure post-graduate-cum-research university cannot be definitely established, and the whole question should have been debated among the widest sections of academics. Instead of such open debate, a small entirely nominated committee has come to a quick, quite possibly very subjective decision. The whole question of possible relationship between differential investments and unequal standards—in central and state universities, between humanities, technical and science students, between allopathic and indigenous systems of medical education, etc—has not been properly analyzed at all. Instead of all this, they are hastily imposing an exact replica of the accreditation systems in the USA.

Question : Maybe not just a copy it seems that in the American accreditation system senior academics have a much greater role, whereas here decisions are being made overwhelmingly by bureaucrats with no connection with actual academic work.

MMP Singh . That's right. And the whole proposed structure is deeply hierarchical : autonomous and semi-autonomous colleges, accredited and semi-accredited colleges, and finally colleges presumably doomed to extinction. The logic is entirely anti-popular and hierarchical.

Question : What are your reactions to the new emphasis upon media-based and other forms of distance education?

MMP Singh : The underlying philosophy here is once again very retrogressive. It is assumed that people's brains are a passive receptacle, knowledge equated with information, is to be broadcast by remote control from a centralized agency, and a superior think-tank will determine the content of education, its syllabi, appointments, institutional structures, etc. We see every day the ways in which the government-owned media is trying to condition and control people's minds, seeking to establish in the crudest possible ways ideological legitimacy for all the misdemeanors of the ruling clique. The net result is a combination of conformism with cynicism, which buttresses ruling-class control and regression, and helps the drive towards authoritarianism. A further problem here consists in the total ignoring of the federal, multi-national character of the Indian polity : state governments are not given any power in respect to TV or radio, and even a Chief Minister's speech can be edited out of the government media by central fiat. The Constituent Assembly had debated seriously proposals to divide control over media between centre and states, but, the final constitution gave all powers in this respect to the centre.

Question : Let us return to the widespread impression that college teaching standards today vary widely, and are generally on the decline because many teachers do not work. The UGC has recently issued a 40 hour-week mandate for teachers as a solution. What are your reactions, both to the general situation and this specific remedy?

MMP Singh : What is often forgotten here is the connection between maintenance/improvement of standards and present college admission policies. Not only are there vast infrastructural variations between college and college and from region to region : the cut-off points in different colleges also vary very widely. A few 'good' colleges consequently get the cream of the students, and teachers with similar qualifications face very different levels of students, depending on which kind of college they happen to have got jobs in. The few good colleges have much better infrastructures (libraries, laboratories, teachers' rooms, playing-grounds etc), and, with their high cut-off points in admission, they get the bulk of students with good marks. Other colleges have been allowed, indeed encouraged, to degenerate into teaching-shops. It is obvious that the motivations, opportunities and stimuli for teachers in these two types of colleges will differ very widely-not because teacher quality in the poorer colleges is necessarily intrinsically inferior, but because of such policy differentials producing variations in intellectual and research facilities. And then after encouraging such differentials and degeneration for years, the teachers of 'inferior' colleges are condemned as obsolescent and useless, and face the prospect of having their colleges shut down in the new policy. A solution which could be discussed may be locality-based colleges, each

catering to a particular area, and with more-or-less similar infrastructural facilities being given to all Hostels and teachers' quarters, for instance, should be built for all colleges—and yet over the last 20 years the UGC has steadily restricted funds for hostels. Similarly library grants could be made more equitable. Such a new policy could also help tackle the immense and growing problems of transport within metropolitan cities. 150,000 Delhi University students have to cover vast distances every day, involving massive wastage of time energy and money, and immense burden on the public transport system, instead of such democratic changes - which would also reduce the existing differentials between allopathic, homeopathic and indigenous medical training schools—the NEP is geared to further enhancing all kinds of differentials, till in 20 years or so only a handful of institutions would remain as 'centers of excellence', while the vast majority would become slums or simply get wound up.

As for the 40 hour-week circular the teachers' movement is opposed to it—but not because we want to shirk genuine academic work. How would it help to improve academic life if a teacher is compelled to stay in his place of work for 40 hours, if the college—in the vast majority of cases—lacks proper teachers' rooms, libraries, laboratory facilities, residential students, etc? The motivated, academically involved teachers would lose even the slender time they now get for further reading or research in outside libraries or archives—while the others would only spend the compulsory attendance hours gossiping or in narrow politicking. Again, in families where both husbands and wives work, at least one has to be back home early in time for the children's return from school—and we must not forget the extra burden of housework for women teachers in our basically patriarchal set-up. A proper creche-child care-cum-recreation system, situated close to each college, is a must if the 40 hour week is to work at all. Otherwise, in a city like Delhi, it is simply unmanageable and oppressive.

Question : Would not such a schedule also delink teaching from research?

MMP Singh : Yes, that would be a further adverse result. Also, if teachers have to sit compulsorily in colleges without opportunities for creative intellectual work, the only result would be a further increase in the power of principals, many of whom are already becoming more despotic and irresponsible under the new dispensation. How little the Government really cares about intellectual standards is indicated by its rejection of even the proposal of the Mahrotra Committee for Rs 1000/- annual personal contingency fund for teachers. All that it is interested in is to tighten bureaucratic controls—and the 40 hour week was being imposed through a statutory amendment in 1985 which the teachers' movement had rightly opposed, which gave UGC the power to stop grants unless its guidelines are being followed. Power is being

centralized in an institution which is utterly unrepresentative, unaccountable to anyone except the Government · there is not a single teacher or student representative in the UGC.

Question : Bureaucratic measures like a 40 hour week would certainly not improve matters But should not the teachers movement also give some thought to the problem of some teachers not taking classes? Could you suggest some concrete measures here, even if a bit speculatively? And should not the DUTA do something about it?

MMP Singh The problem is that the authorities who talk loudly about raising standards and condemn teachers for laziness are precisely often the people who bring in sub-standard elements into the profession—through corrupt selection procedures, manipulated by Vice-Chancellors, Governing Bodies, Principals or Heads of Departments The best check would have been the preservation-cum-extension of the democratic institutions which had developed within colleges in the post-1967 era, particularly in Delhi University . the Staff Associations and Staff Councils with real powers, elected teachers in Governing Bodies, etc These had functioned well in the early 1970s, but they have been progressively throttled during and after the Emergency—and disintegration has been particularly rapid over the last 2-3 years, with principals dividing up teachers and undermining these bodies

Question Could 'periodic' student-teacher joint meetings help bring about some kind of democratic accountability of teachers?

MMP Singh . In principle, yes—but we must also remember the concrete situation in Delhi University, where democratic students movements are very weak, and sections of students can often be manipulated by corrupt principals precisely against motivated, progressive teachers Principals themselves seldom take the stipulated number of classes, their cohorts emulate them, and they often patronize and protect the lazy teachers. One possible machinery could be written complaints by students to departments, if the latter cannot discipline the teacher, the matter could be taken up by the Staff Association and then the Staff Council This does work, sometimes—in the School of Correspondence Courses, for instances, the Staff Council has been able to discipline a teacher who had not been coming for 4 months But, as I have said, a properly functioning democratic machinery inside colleges is the prerequisite for such things—the DUTA as an apex body cannot tackle, it by itself Fundamentally, teachers' self-discipline is bound up with democratization

Question What are the prospects of the all-India teachers' movement today?

MMP Singh : The 1987 demands—blocking of multiplicity of grades, continuation of merit promotion schemes, professors grade in colleges, implementation of the positive elements in the Mahrotra Report, simultaneous introduction of revised pay scales in all universities—are far from being fully realized even today. As yet, real implementation of revised scales remains very uneven in state universities. The resistance here is clearly connected with the Government desire to maintain or create divisions. The majority of private colleges have not got the new scales as yet. Efforts are being made by various Governments to link up implementation with retrogressive changes like increased work-load unfavourable shift in teacher-student ratios, etc.

There have been several major regional movements in recent months. These include the long strike in Maharashtra, which obtained some economic relief but failed to end the major anomaly in that state concerning so-called junior teachers. In Bihar, a big two-month long strike was disrupted when the Patna University teachers concluded a separate agreement, demoralizing the movement. The Patna Teachers' Association had been captured by a BJP-Congress combine on a platform very critical of the AIFUCTO behaviour in September 1987, but now they have done something quite similar. Two strikes have taken place in Orissa, without achieving implementation of the new scales. So despite occasional regional militancy, the general picture remains one of weakness and fragmentation, in the face of the determined Government offensive of NEP. A confederation of the different teachers groups is clearly becoming necessary—a confederation, however, with a new kind of organization and style of functioning, otherwise nothing much will change.

Question : Not, then, a simple return to the old AIFUCTO?

MMP Singh : I do not think so.

SUMIT SARKAR*

Autonomy for Whom?

The government of Rajiv Gandhi has displayed unusual consistency and determination in the field of higher education. Undeterred by the experience of 1987, when the linking-up of a belated pay-rise with retrogressive changes in service conditions provoked a country-wide teachers' strike, it sought to introduce even more far-reaching reforms.

Within a few years, it seems, autonomy will become the normal condition for postgraduate departments, while the present system of affiliating universities would be broken up and replaced by autonomous colleges under a new all-India Accreditation and Assessment Council.

Autonomy everywhere, it appears, and recent UGC reports begin with much talk about the need for 'an alternative style of management to the command and control, hierarchical bureaucratic method.' (Report of Committee on Accreditation and Assessment Council, UGC, December 1987, pp i, iii).

Teachers, then, must have been fools when they talked so much about bureaucratic threats to academic freedom before and during the 1987 movement. And if the Hospitals and Other Institutions Bill strikes a discordant note, could it not be a mere aberration, something drawn up by a different government department?

Actually, there is a coherent logic behind all these manifestations of the New Education Policy. It is a logic well worth rescuing from behind the smoke-screen of democratic rhetoric and double talk.

Let us begin with the assumption implicit in all these schemes: small, by definition, is not only beautiful but democratic; decentralisation and autonomy inevitably contribute to freedom. Rhetoric of this kind has a very wide and diverse appeal today, ranging from advocates of *laissez-faire* through Gandhian and ecological movements to intellectuals counterposing 'community' values to the bureaucratic 'nation-state'.

It is all the more necessary, therefore, to make some fairly obvious distinctions. Feudalism in early medieval Europe was uniquely decentralised, the bulk of the people, however, were serfs. The southern states of America tried to secede in the 1860s, in defence of an autonomous way of life based on slavery. To take an opposite—and

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very topical—example, what is making Gorbachev's Soviet Union so attractive is the combination of perestroika with democratisation. Economic decentralisation alone could very well have meant greater powers to managerial technocratic elites, but glasnost is coming to imply intellectual pluralism within and outside the party, workers electing managers, and efforts to revitalise Soviets.

'Liberalisation' in contemporary Britain—or Rajiv's India—in total contrast, has a clear anti-democratic, anti-labour thrust. Thatcher smashed the miners' strike; our Parliament has before it now two bills seeking to drastically curtail or eliminate collective bargaining and the right to strike.

What we have to explore, in every case, are the power-relations within, and between, the autonomous units. The crucial question, always, is: autonomy for whom?

Autonomous university departments, we are assured, will 'provide freedom to the teachers and students to make innovations, utilise creative talent, improve upon standards of education . . .' (Report of UGC Committee on Scheme for Working of an Autonomous Department/Centre within the framework of a University, p. 3). How all this will happen becomes rather mysterious when we notice that a good half, or more, of an average-sized university department will be excluded, at any given time, from the Departmental Council—while there is no suggestion whatsoever for any consultation with students.

The Departmental Council is to consist of the head, the immediately preceding and future heads, and 'up to three' each of professors, readers and lecturers, 'by rotation in order of seniority,' plus no less than five external experts. A clear preponderance for professors, it may be noted, for headship in most cases rotates among them alone. University teachers who happen not to be members need not be consulted even in the framing of syllabi, nor will they have any power to requisition meetings of the department—while expert panels for selection committees will be suggested 'by a committee of professors' alone.

'And anyway the Departmental Council 'may not meet once every quarter'—i.e., keeping in mind the vacations, maybe no more than three times a year. Its function will obviously be to 'overview' and give general 'directions' (ibid., pp. 9,10,14): day-to-day administration, often the really vital thing, thus becomes the prerogative of the head alone.

A comparison with the present situation in Delhi University, say, is revealing. Departmental Councils normally consist of all members of the department, they meet frequently, sometimes as often as once a week, to discuss a very wide range of issues, expert panels are drawn up by a committee of courses with representation of all grades of teachers, including some from colleges; and—in some departments at least—syllabi are formulated with the participation of all teachers in the subject, college and postgraduate alike.

Autonomy under the new scheme evidently means autonomy for the head alone—and the new set-up would positively encourage the formation of dominant cliques around the head, for the oligarchically constituted Departmental Council will also have greater patronage and other powers.

A close reading of the 'UGC Revised Guidelines on the Scheme of Autonomous Colleges' (January 1987) reveals a very similar pattern. After generously promising 'a lot of participation to academics along with responsibility' and 'academic freedom', the scheme in Annexures III-V proceeds to eliminate altogether all elected teacher representatives from governing bodies and academic councils of autonomous colleges. Everywhere elections are replaced by the highly democratic principle of 'rotation according to seniority', and departmental teachers of less than five years' service are to be excluded even from boards of studies.

Academic councils and boards of studies will meet only once a year on a schedule drawn up by the principal, who will evidently have complete control over all vital, day-to-day college decisions. How the 'accountability' of principals (or members of governing bodies) is to be ensured is never discussed in the scheme, but, of course, bureaucrats or nominees of the political group in power can never be corrupt, while teachers tend to be delinquent by definition.

But still more beauties are in store for us. Annexure XIII of the Revised Guidelines gives us all our future timetable as academics: Forty hours a week inside departments or college, with preparation for teaching 'mostly done in the department/college' (never mind if college libraries are often woefully inadequate, or if teachers sometimes don't have rooms, desks or even enough chairs to sit on). Post-graduate teachers are generously allotted some time for research and 'own reading/studies'—no such luxuries, however, for undergraduate colleagues. The duties specific for every one of these 40 hours have been spelled out—in blithe disregard of the elementary fact that a good teacher is marked out from the merely competent one by the use of 'free' time for reading around and beyond one's specific discipline.

Academic life is not office-work, it can flourish only if rigid separations are not made between 'work' and 'leisure'. What we are threatened with, however, is the 'deadly statistical clock' of Charles Dickens' *Gradgrind*, 'which measured every second with a beat like a rap upon a coffin-lid'.

Autonomous colleges—and all colleges will be 'forced to be free' in five years' time, or lose all Central funds—are to be monitored by a new Accreditation and Assessment Council. Anti-bureaucratic rhetoric is particularly copious in the introductory pages of the draft UGC report on this project.

The models for 'democratic' academic reorganisation come entirely from the USA and—more startlingly—Japan. 'One of the leaders of the

Japanese ascendancy' is approvingly quoted: 'To motivate people, you must bring them into the family. . .' (UGC Committee Report on Accreditation and Assessment Council, pp. 1-2) Japan, among all the industrially advanced countries, is notable for the relative weakness of democratic traditions and strength of patriarchal norms. It should not come as a surprise, after this remarkable curtainraiser, to discover that the 'working academic' whose 'authority and dignity' is to be 'the first postulate of the new system' (ibid, p. 2) turns out to be identical with the vice-chancellor/principal: in fact, a small handful initially even among that exalted breed.

The UGC, to begin with, will select 20 'good autonomous institutions' (on what criteria we are not informed) as founder-members of an Accreditation Association, and these will later sit in judgement on prospective candidates for membership. 'Each institution's representative to the annual meeting of the Association will be appointed by the administrative head of the institution, the vice-chancellor or the principal' (ibid, p. 6) not even executive council or governing bodies are to be consulted, let alone academic councils.

It is not impossible, after all, that even an institution with excellent academic traditions might at a particular time have an incompetent or corrupt head. Yet such people will be given exceptional powers, without any visible 'accountability'.

The Accreditation Commission set up by this select group of vice-chancellor/principal's nominee would assess other institutions. Those which fail to reach or maintain the requisite grade (according to a 12-point criteria, which include gems like 'aesthetically-pleasing. . . buildings, grounds and equipment'—p. 9) will have all Central assistance cut off after five years. As the draft report delicately phrases it, 'some painful decisions will have to be made. . .' (p. 10). A rather neat paradox here, is that colleges will have to be 'financially stable' to qualify for accreditation and Central funding (p. 9). If, as is true for most educational institutions throughout the world, they are in need of governmental assistance (which means, in the Indian context, primarily Central UGC funding), they will not get it.

What we are in for, fairly obviously, is an enormous sharpening of elitism and differentials, along with wholesale privatisation. Colleges with resources and/or the right 'contacts' will get more funds; those less lucky will have the 'painful decision' of closure imposed on them, or else survive through raising student fees or begging for private funds.

A related consequence would be the encouragement of any number of fissiparous tendencies, in glaring contradiction to the much-trumpeted ideal of 'national integration'. Isolated 'autonomous' colleges, dominated by petty despots or oligarchical cliques, will provide the ideal breeding-ground for the narrowest kind of regional, caste or communal politicking. It is not accidental that certain vested interests

among denominational groups have been advocates of such 'autonomy' for many years now.

The draft Accreditation Council report explicitly states that 'affiliating universities will. . . not be eligible for candidature until they have diverted themselves of. . . (affiliated) colleges at least to the extent of semi-autonomy'. (p. 11). The implications are certainly interesting: vice-chancellors of JNU and Jamia sitting in judgement over Delhi; Rabindra Bharati and Jadavpur getting a headstart over Calcutta

It seems a legitimate inference that the draft report is not making any judgement of academic quality here. The argument is that the affiliating 'set up. . . is by its nature too violative of individual and departmental academic autonomy'—the latter phrases being obviously code words for inadequate 'autonomy' of principals and vice-chancellors, the only 'working academics' and 'responsible educators' worth bothering about. Affiliating universities do tend to have irritating encumbrances in the shape of academic councils with some elected teachers, and, often, reasonably effective teachers' movements.

We have come at last to the crux of the entire logic: the real aim is, above all, to pulverise the teachers' movement by segregating the teachers into isolated, differentiated, and despotically managed units. The Hospitals and Other Institutions Bill, euphemistically sub-titled 'Redressal of Grievances of Employees', is not, therefore, an accidental aberration; it provides the cornerstone of the entire dazzling bureaucratic arch. The Bill, applicable to all educational institutions from research bodies down to unaided schools, as well as to hospitals, charitable organisations and khadi and village industries, simultaneously blocks recourse to normal courts of law and drastically curtails elementary trade-union rights.

'Individual grievances' will go up to one-person 'redressal' and 'appellate' authorities nominated by the employer. Thus, a principal, having dismissed a teacher, can clinch the matter by appointing his vice-principal as the appellate authority: it is difficult to say who else he can appoint, for the grievance redressal authority must be someone 'employed in a managerial capacity' in the same establishment.

For 'collective grievances', there will be a management council with employee representation, but free scope is given to divide-and-rule through a multiplicity of associations and 'company unions', for representation will be given to any group with just 10 per cent of total membership.

'Collective grievances,' again, are very narrowly and economically defined (wages and allowances, hours of work, leave, retirement benefits) They do not include, for instance, victimisation of a teacher activist, or arbitrary academic decisions by vice-chancellors, principals or research heads. The ultimate resort for both sorts of grievances would be government-appointed tribunals and arbitrators—

whose decisions, curiously enough, would be mandatory for everyone except the government itself

Strikes are banned 'during the period of pendency of any proceeding in connection with any grievance'—i.e., a petition by a single employee pending before the redressal mechanism would presumably be sufficient to make any strike in that institution illegal, even if it is on totally unrelated issues. And draconian minimum punishments are laid down for illegal strikes, ranging up to six months' jail and a Rs. 10,000 fine.

No one can deny that our educational system needs thorough reforms: standards vary widely, and are often frankly abysmal. Existing teachers' movements, too, suffer from numerous deficiencies and limitations—though it is worth remembering that teachers proved capable of transcending all manner of differences in a month-long strike, providing an example of national integration at a time of acute communal and regional tension. The point, however, is that the remedies being enforced are far worse than the disease.

The new model is one of isolated, oligarchically-controlled units, integrated only via bureaucratic linkages like the proposed National Test for the recruitment of teachers (which is to be independent even of the otherwise so powerful Accreditation Council).

The 1986 National Policy of Education has already proclaimed as an ultimate aim 'the establishment of the Indian Education Service as an all-India service', obviously government-controlled. Teacher-politics, it may be added, is not likely to be ended under the new dispensation. Rather, politics would tend to get reduced to politicking, narrow factional squabbles within small confines, with departmental heads and principals favouring their own caste, religious community or language-group at the expense of others. Enforced servility to petty bosses for survival and advancement is hardly the royal road to healthy academic life and improved standards. Educational standards, in fact, are likely to become far more uneven—the imagination boggles at the thought of literally thousands of autonomous colleges, all 'deemed to be universities', busy churning out degrees.

They will also decline, for a whole series of disincentives are being provided for bright potential entrants to the teaching profession: an additional qualifying test (likely to be of highly dubious quality, if the test for UGC research fellowships is any guide), two years probation in place of one, bureaucratic screening procedures for promotions, an absurd time-schedule, long years spent in total subordination to elderly oligarchs.

Students are bound to be the worst sufferers, with diverse and declining teaching standards, higher fees, and the prospect of many colleges closing down. It seems all too likely that relatively deprived groups and regions may find the doors of higher education and related jobs progressively restricted—the most fertile soil imaginable for any number of sectional or even separatist movements.

The draft Accreditation Council report claims to be fighting against the legacies of colonial rule in education. What it has sought to eliminate, however, are precisely the features which the British in the era of nationalism found objectionable. The Universities Act of 1904 had reduced the elected teacher element in senates, raised college fees, and extended official in place of university controls over affiliation.

There was even a hint of what today would be called 'autonomy' in the special status enjoyed by institutions like Presidency College, only loosely connected to Calcutta University, but of course under government control. Lord Curzon would have been a happy man today: he has worthy successors.

NIVEDITA MENON*
SASWATI SENGUPTA**

Attending an Orientation Course

The General Orientation Course for University Teachers (Code 012) organised by the Centre for Professional Development in Higher Education (CPDHE) came to a close on May 2, 1989. It had taken up four six-day weeks and was the second course of its kind. Most of the 33 participants had not opted to do the course, but had been co-opted by their colleges, having been given to understand that it was a pre-requisite for confirmation/promotion. We presume that CPDHE/UGC have instructed colleges along these lines. However, no amount of direct questioning, even of UGC officials, the Vice-Chancellor or the DUTA President, all of whom addressed the Course, could elicit any clear picture regarding the statutory requirement of these courses. The responses were usually along the lines of—'Do we have to force you, aren't you benefiting from this?' The participants, for their part, showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm, the general attitude being that if this was essential to get one's promotion, it was better to be done with it as fast as possible.

At this point we would like to clarify that we are not against training for lecturers. A well-designed course could, perhaps, serve to systematize principles of teaching intuitively arrived at, and help to make teacher-student interaction more effective. However, the General Orientation courses designed by the CPDHE seem to serve no purpose other than to establish on paper that Delhi University has moved with alacrity to implement the New Education Policy.

From our experience in Course # 012, we have the following observations to make.

- 1 It is typical of the system that we are expected to survive the years before we get permanent jobs with no training other than common sense, and are put through training of an *insultingly* basic level when we all have a minimum of two years of experience.¹ At this stage in our careers we scarcely need the kind of training that tells us that cards are useful while delivering a lecture or that the goals

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of a University are the three C's—the Creation, Conservation and Communication of knowledge. Indeed, we are tempted to conjecture that such information is redundant even to the most inexperienced teacher.

- 2 The lecture schedule for this particular course utilized time very badly. There were 2 lectures of 1 hour each a day, each followed by one-and-a-half hours for discussions. Originally, the scheduled time was 3 hours for each session and it was only on active intervention by the participants that the schedule was restructured. Even with two-and-a-half hours however, sessions usually had to be dragged on to meet the time allotted as most lectures did not generate material for discussion.

On several afternoons when scheduled speakers did not arrive, we were not permitted to leave, but were 'kept busy' by the Course Director, who took session after session to inform us that a good teacher prepares her lectures, 'has mastery over her subject' and so on.

We wonder what the financial advantages are in dragging out the Course for a month and in keeping us 'busy'. We were told by the Course Director that the UGC spends Rs.1 lakh on each such course.

- 3 The topics for the lectures were, by and large, platitudinous and repetitive. For instance:
 - a) Education and Development
 - b) Role of Higher Education in the Development process
 - c) Higher Education and the Transmission of values
 - d) Coming to the University: A way of life
 - e) Imparting knowledge: Lectures
 - f) Imparting knowledge: Projects and Practicals
 - g) Imparting knowledge: Tutorials and Preceptorials.

As a result, lectures were, most often, little more than embroidered bio-data (full of references to trips abroad and encounters with grateful students) or a string of rhetorical questions and hackneyed platitudes such as 'Teachers should know the psychology of youth'. One of the speakers actually said at the beginning of his lecture - 'Let me say something to utilize the time'. This was precisely the spirit in which most speakers functioned. Dr. D.S. Kothari, for example, actually dictated (with punctuation) 3 quotations from Einstein, Buddha and Gandhi. These quotations were repeated and explained several times. We give one of the quotations below, so that it can speak for itself—'Keep good comradeship and work with love and without preconceived ideas. Then you will be happy' (Einstein).

- 3.1 On the other hand, resource people whom we could have engaged in meaningful dialogue were hamstrung by the vagueness of the topics assigned to them. For instance, Prof. Y.

Alagh of the Planning Commission, who was to speak on 'Education and Development' stated that since he was not the education person on the Planning Commission, he did not feel competent to discuss the topic fully. As a result, his lecture explored agriculture and development, but for the rest was a series of truisms about illiteracy as related to underdevelopment.

Similarly, the Professor from the Deptt of Psychology, D U was to speak on 'Coming to the University: A way of Life'. He confessed the topic conveyed little to him and did not deliver a lecture at all, inviting questions from participants instead. This led to a totally unstructured and fruitless discussion which certainly 'utilized the time', but did little else.

Topics should have been chosen keeping in mind the specialization of the resource people.

- 4 There was a clearly authoritarian undercurrent beneath the professed democratic facade which 'encouraged dissent'.

- 4.1 This emerged most clearly with the UGC officials, who spoke to us on Role of Govt. and UGC. They refused to answer some questions on the grounds that they were too general and others on the grounds that they were too specific. Any other anomalies in the system that were neither general nor specific they were willing to resolve, they assured us, but, for the fact that they had 'Other pressing agendas'.

Evidently then, it was not for the teachers to question the contradictions, compulsions and motivations behind UGC's actions. In fact, the UGC officials said in so many words that we were to function within the system and not question it, as it has been authorized by the Government of India.

- 4.2 We were to evaluate each lecture using a proforma given to us by CPDHE. There were three given categories - Very Good, Good and Fairly Well.² When we pointed out that many lectures needed to be placed in far less flattering categories, we were told that as the resource people were eminent guests of CPDHE, diplomatic language must be used.

We were also expected to write our names and sign on the proforma. If the purpose was to obtain honest appraisals, the normal practice is to ensure anonymity.

Furthermore, there was a rumour in the group that we were expected not to note any speaker as 'Fairly Well'. We do not know how this rumour arose, but the fact that it was current at all points to the kind of atmosphere in which teachers of Delhi University function.

- 4.3 The rapporteurs for the different sessions were told that their job was to do 'factual reporting', they were not to be critical in their report.

- 4.4 After the first two days, when some of us had been outspoken about sexist remarks by resource persons, we were reminded that speakers were guests and we were not to be 'too direct' in our criticism
5. There were 32 women in our group of 33, only 3 of whom were from co-educational institutions
 - 5.1 We were led to wonder therefore, if only women's colleges are taking UGC directives seriously. Certainly very few of us from women's colleges were given a choice in the matter, while in at least two co-educational colleges, the notice simply stated that if teachers were 'desirous' of attending any courses in CPDHE, they were welcome to do so

Is the UGC putting more pressure on women's colleges on the premise that women are more amenable to discipline? Or are women's colleges supposed to be more motivated and willing to try out courses which might improve efficiency? Certainly the overwhelming preponderance of women in this course, only the second such course to be conducted so far, cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence
 - 5.2 The composition of our group also attracted blatantly sexist observations from some speakers.

In the inaugural lecture, Prof. M V Mathur stated that women teachers stagnated after a while because they could not keep up with professional requirements. This was due to their household responsibilities, he said, and suggested the solution of half-time jobs with half emoluments for women.

Prof. D S Kothari in the course of his lecture asked how many of us were married, had children, and whether we all cooked well. These, he stated, were necessary attributes of a good teacher. We presume he would not have said the same to a group of men.

Prof. Y Alagh said in passing (while referring to subsidized higher education) that 'girls in college while away time waiting for their Prince Charming at state expense'. He however, did apologize in response to objections

CONCLUSION

These questions were raised with the Vice Chancellor when he attended the final session (It is interesting that a VC who is normally inaccessible to teachers wishing to discuss issues they are seriously exercised by, could spare the time to attend three sessions of this evidently high-priority course). His response was cast in terms of lack of understanding of the questioners, their lack of humility in assuming that they had nothing more to learn, and their paranoia in seeing authoritarianism everywhere. Evidently, the CPDHE catch-phrase, 'encouragement of dissent', meant only that we are permitted to suggest

modifications which may be considered; attempts to question the basic assumptions of the system are seen to arise from ignorance and hysteria.

We would like to reiterate that this is not an arrogant outburst from people who think lecturers are above training. But we have serious doubts about an orientation programme which at best is pitched at the level of abstract, utopic prescriptions and the rest of the time is restricted to meaningless platitudes. We do have tentative ideas for a more meaningful programme, a compact one of about two weeks. It could include a) a multi-disciplinary component where we are exposed to areas other than our own. Basic lectures on Economics, Politics, Psychology, Science and so on could open up new avenues of thought, b) An understanding of the structure and functioning of the University concerned, the role of Staff Councils and Associations in Colleges, rules pertaining to service conditions of teachers, the composition and powers of the Governing Bodies and so on, c) Inter-action with students, who could be identified for the purpose through staff Advisers/Students' Unions. d) A fresh look at methods of teaching which should be evolved collectively by the group, and not taught to us by supposed experts. We could take turns in delivering lectures to the group which could analyse delivery and content and evolve innovations and improvisations through discussion.

Such courses furthermore, should be worked out by colleges themselves, keeping in mind their specific requirements.

General Orientation Courses as they stand, are classic illustrations of the philosophy of the New Education Policy. While most colleges lack basic facilities, lakhs of rupees are squandered on these high-visibility, hi-tech courses: plush upholstery, individual mikes, white boards to be written on with black pens, over-head projectors and sumptuous lunches. There is something immoral in discussing, as we did in one session, how audio-visual equipment can be invaluable to teaching, when in that very room there were teachers who have to function in reality with meagre library facilities, no rooms to hold tutorials in and barely adequate staff rooms.

The one achievement of these courses is to confirm the New Education Policy's attempt to bureaucratize and contain academia, mass-producing perfectly oriented, perfectly programmed teachers—their creativity stifled, their critical faculties cauterized.

NOTES

- 1 These courses are for permanent teachers with five years or less of experience.
- 2 We will not here comment on the grammatical inaccuracy of 'Fairly Well' in this context, as it could be argued that rules of grammar are used to entrench ideological power.

ALOK RAI*

Humanities: Who Needs Them Anyway?

In 1959, C. P. Snow made an influential formulation regarding the two mutually exclusive and even hostile cultures that had emerged in British academic life. On the one side were ranged the adherents of the traditional kinds of knowledge, the philosophers and the historians, the men of literature and of culture, on the other, the acolytes of science, immeasurably strengthened and even emboldened by their alliance with technology and so with commerce. The course of the British debate is not of immediate relevance to us here—but Snow's formulation enables us to see that, in *our* context, there are no two cultures. A kind of mechanistic vision which hardly deserves the name of science has acquired almost total dominance. The only culture is that of narrow-minded Gradgrinds, energetic helots vainly trying to fit the complexity of human response into simple utilitarian equations. The fact that the State itself has taken to braying about a kind of prettified 'culture' is only part of the problem: the elimination of the profoundly serious vision *and culture* of the humanities from all public discourse including, crucially, the discourse regarding education itself. It must be recognised, however, that the humanities themselves have made a significant contribution to this process of their annihilation. If the humanities—as *practised*—had not dwindled into triviality and irrelevance, there might at least have been a whimper of protest at their unceremonious deletion. My task in this essay is, therefore, a difficult one. I seek not only to criticise the mechanistic and reductive vision of human possibility that motivates the authors of the New Education Policy (NEP), but I seek to do so in the name of a conception of the humanities that must also be a critique of the existing practice of the humanities, and of their decline into fatuous marginality.

There is, thus, an element of poetic justice in this infliction of the NEP—a suggestion, as in ancient folk tales, of the process by which destiny, like some ghostly and infinitely painstaking adjudicator, fabricates ironic but also strangely adequate rewards. Thus, the failure of the education system really to educate any one at all has finally come to haunt it in the shape of illiterate policy makers. Its own grotesque and deformed products are come back to pass judgment upon it.

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This would be high melodrama—if only one could regard the situation from a position of godlike indifference. Unfortunately, however, all of us are part of it—and this melodrama will soon modulate into a tragedy even bleaker than the one which we inhabit.

If one looks at the present situation of the humanities, the disarray and the demoralisation is almost too painful for words. The overwhelming majority of the students consists merely of people who have failed to make it into the professional courses—failed even to secure a berth in the straight science and commerce courses. (The relative buoyancy of the commerce stream is a recent development, indicative perhaps not only of the growing confidence of the Indian money-making classes, but also of the deepening crisis in the humanities.) The humanities or 'Arts' students are, always with exceptions, the low-achievers, the derelicts who do not formally become drop-outs simply because inertia compels them—and a low fee structure enables them—to maintain the fiction that they are 'students'. It is tempting, and not uncommon in academia, to blame these unfortunates for the present condition—blaming the victims, in fact.

The torpid directionlessness of the student body finds a near-perfect analogue in the disgruntled indolence of the academic community. Like priests in a story by Maugham or by Graham Greene, stranded in an alien environment and forgotten by a ramshackle Church, we have become the forlorn irregulars of a lost, scarcely remembered faith. Some of the rituals are still maintained—lectures are delivered, syllabi are tinkered with, examinations taken, diplomas of wholly dubious worth and significance are still awarded—but there is hardly any sense of any larger intellectual or cultural or social project to which we might belong. The great, and often the only, consolation in this degraded and degrading condition is self-pity.

It requires something of an effort to rouse ourselves and to try and gain an analytical purchase on our present predicament. Clearly, a significant part of what is wrong with the educational situation as a whole—but particularly with respect to higher education in the humanities—is the chaotically headlong expansion over the last four decades. Popular responses even within academia notwithstanding, there was nothing wrong with expansion *per se*. Indeed, with respect to the earlier stages of education, one can say unhesitatingly that there has not been sufficient expansion. However, such expansion as there has been, while it was desirable from a democratic point of view, now manifests itself as a problem because, of course, it has been entirely ad hoc and unprepared. Indeed, much of it has been undertaken for ends that are not only anti-educational, they are not even truly democratic—unless, of course, one conflates 'democracy' with the patronage networks that characterised feudal India, and now appear in a slightly modified disguise. For some reason, there doesn't appear to be much electoral advantage in sponsoring primary schools, but colleges and sometimes even universities have been set up merely as

demonstrations of the power of this or that political boss, this or that chieftain. Unfortunately, however, the political classes which have demonstrated their clout in this fashion, have but a remote acquaintance with the process of education as such. Otherwise, one can visualise sundry Cong-I mobsters rioting about the fact that a college (or even a university) has been established without any books or journals, with nothing except a few rickety chairs and tables to accommodate the bewildered recipients of that travesty which we still haven't learnt to call 'education'. The situation in the sciences is, relatively, better. Laboratories even the benighted bureaucratic mind can understand—beakers, rheostats, oscilloscopes, hard, material *things*. The crude physical limitation has worked to save the sciences from the depredation that unfinanced increases in the student enrolment have wrought in the humanities. To the vulgar mind, which confuses education with what transpires in lecture halls, an additional student in philosophy or literature involves *zero* marginal cost. 'n+1' students may, so the reasoning goes, just as easily hear what 'n' were being subjected to previously. Three or four extra students may mean an extra bench—but that is all the extra provision that is deemed necessary, *at best*. It is indeed significant that the demand for extra enrolment in colleges and universities is invariably expressed as a demand for more 'seats'. That is frequently all it amounts to.

The urgency of the need which this flood of students represents in its dumb and inarticulate fashion has, over and above the secular impoverishment of the available facilities, done a lot to pulverise whatever little, tenuous rationale the humanities might have developed in the past century or so in this country. The level of their material deprivation, the terrifying simplicity of their need—a job, a means to earn a livelihood, no more—is such that it seems almost inhumane to actually expect them to want education instead of the degrees that they, unreasonably, expect will get them jobs. (As if education could, by some miracle of misguided benevolence—firsts for all—actually rectify the wrongs and the criminal neglect of the larger economic system.) With what moral authority can one stand between the semiliterate undergraduate and his degree, demanding that he reads books to which he has no access, sensitise himself to nuances of feeling and idea which are more remote from his brutalised daily existence than the stars under which he reads—by the light of street-lamps? And yet, on the other hand, what is the academic fallout—in the short, medium and longer term—of admitting to higher academic degrees hundreds of these victims of heartless social process? Day after day, in institution after institution, Christ's miracle of the insufficient loaves and fishes (or was it bread and wine?) is repeated: desperate educators pretend to dispense education in the absence of even the most basic texts. A flash of the old academic wrist, a shuffle here, an 'orientation' there, and—you better believe it—trim and proper graduates will start filing out. The tragedy is that *none* of this is

news—it is tediously familiar to anyone who has ever had anything to do with education. By some miracle, some managerial prestidigitation, some slick copy-writers' rhetoric, it'll lie down and play dead and go away.

Unfortunately, this callow fakery isn't the only thing that makes one feel sick. A large part of the *ingrained* defect of our education, particularly in respect of the humanities, derives from its colonial antecedents. It is ironic to reflect that in the famous controversy between the Orientalists and the Anglicists almost two centuries ago, the latter (who won the battle and probably lost the war) favoured English on the ground that it would afford access to various forms of modern and useful knowledge. In the event, however, English education became an integral part of the English colonial dispensation: necessarily precluded from any living contact with Indian reality, it became instead a sort of embellishment for the aspiring native elite. What effect all this had on the development of Indian science is a separate story—but the effect on the humanities was little short of catastrophic. Cut off from any urgencies that sprang from their environment in which they had their being, cut off from the necessary umbilical relationship with that *totality* of the human situation which colonial censorship had rendered *unthinkable*, the humanities were soon evacuated of any content. The emasculation did not go unrewarded: the eunuch was accommodated in the harem. Knowing the language—in a superficial, gabbling fashion—itself became a significant index of educational accomplishment, a certain shallow familiarity with the culture of the *sahib log* was deemed intrinsically worthwhile. The humanities inevitably dwindled into a function that was essentially *cosmetic*. It has all added up to a heavy legacy of *triviality* which the humanities have yet to overcome. (I know I am oversimplifying the specific histories—particularly of the discipline of history—will show considerable variation. Still, I persist.)

It was upon this scene of devastation and low, narrow mental horizons, this desert in which a prodigal country has seen fit to sacrifice successive generations of its young men and women, that the NEP made its much-trumpeted appearance about three years back. The need for some bold, radical departure had been evident—and articulated—within academia for a long time. Obviously, *any* system is likely to create vested interests, groups and individuals who have made investments of one sort and another in indolence and waste and corruption. But it is sheer arrogance on the part of the authors of the NEP to maintain that the chorus of academic outrage that greeted the NEP was composed entirely of venal and corrupt hacks. The fact of the matter is that, for all its immense powers of coercion and patronage, Shastri Bhavan was unable to find a *single* academic of any standing to speak up in favour of the provisions of their NEP—excluding, always, those pathetic but powerful individuals who have supped too long off the crumbs of official patronage. Academia was (and to this day,

remains) hungry for an initiative that can start the long trek out of this wilderness in which we are stranded

And, be it said, there was about the NEP a certain brisk instrumentalism that was, *prima facie*, far from unattractive. Here, at last, it seemed as if there was a willingness to get beyond the usual fatuities, and actually engage with the grotesque realities of our condition. The NEP derived a certain moral authority from the fact that it sought to mobilise education too in the sacred and too-long-neglected task of 'development'. It appeared to embody the crucial realisation that such an alliance was not only necessary for development, as a way of converting those taxpayers' rupees to national account, it was essential also in order to nudge education back into a vivifying engagement with its ambient reality. However, there was an inescapable vulgarity in the concept of *education* itself that lay at the heart of the NEP: its conception of education, once one got beyond the rhetorical outworks, was merely the mechanistic/utilitarian obverse of that debased coin of traditionally frivolous education that we had inherited from the British. For all its modern and radical pretention, it was marked by the stigmata of its origins. It became instantly evident—and not without the aforementioned *frisson* of 'poetic justice'—that the *default* of the education system, its failure to communicate the possible *excitement* of education, had finally come home to roost. It is after all no wonder that these Calibans know of language only the brutalised dialect of the current predicament—or, to put it in other words, have we in academia earned the right to be *surprised* by the NEP?

The NEP is, understandably, much concerned with the question of *training*, of raising the level of skills available in the country. This flows, naturally enough, from the professed concern to harness education to the sluggish engine of development. We are plentifully supplied with 'human resources', and a bureaucratic reconfiguration of the ministries makes them, too, eligible for 'development'. Such a strategy is, manifestly, in the interests of all concerned—in the interests of the recipients of education who, instead of being handed worthless diplomas after drifting through sundry courses and institutions, will be endowed with specific skills which will enable them to do something more useful than lounging about on street corners. The country, too, will benefit: it will have clawed its way out of the swamp of poverty and low productivity and widespread unemployment. The plausibility—and even the force—of the argument is undeniable. Its appeal is calculated to cut across the ideological divide—the right will welcome better workers, the left will welcome work.

However, it is this insidious linkage with 'development' that makes it particularly difficult, but also particularly necessary, to insist on certain distinctions, and on certain neglected areas of academic and educational activity. Good, efficient training in specific and socially desirable and, one hopes, *socially desired*, skills is certainly

to be welcomed. There is, further, no contradiction between such *training* and *education* but there is a distinction. The accents of John Stuart Mill's address regarding the idea of university education to the students of St Andrew's in 1867 sound antiquated now, and heavily inflected with multiple ironies 'It is not a place of professional education. Universities are not intended to teach the knowledge to fit men for some special mode of gaining their livelihood. Their object is not to make skilful lawyers, or physicians, or engineers, but equable and cultivated human beings.' There isn't too much evidence of equability and cultivation in our universities now, but for the rest, Mill sounds, albeit inadvertently, much like a contemporary critic of the beleaguered Indian university'

But, ironies apart, there is a serious point to be made here, a point that reveals the sinister face of the NEP. To come to the point directly, 'training' can and should be tailored to precisely defined ends, specific projects of manpower allocation. But what of the process of 'definition' itself, of the process whereby specific designs and strategies of development are preferred and rejected? Is this process—and the democratic sub-processes that constitute it—to lie completely beyond the reach, influence and intervention of education? The social sciences are increasingly trapped in the inherently conservative ideologies of naive empiricism: this self-castration is the price they pay, cheerfully, for their 'scientific' status. But where is the impulse to transcend the 'given' conditions, to think down to the foundations of the present predicament, and then up again, going to come from?

The 'humanities' have been understood to mean different things at different times in the past: as the Greek and Latin classics, or as the 'other' of science. However for our present purposes, what we mean by the 'humanities' is simply the domain of 'secular' knowledge, distinct not only from 'divinity' but also from the sciences. Clearly, the humanities consist of a multitude of *discriminable* disciplines—of history, and philosophy, and literature. But what distinguishes all of these is a potential common project: the *totality* of man in the world. It is this perspective of totality that, finally, distinguishes the humanities. Thus, it is possible to study history humanistically, as the partial narratives of human becoming. But the nesting and overlapping times of such human history can also splinter into a meaningless jumble of dates and events, quiz raw material. It is true that this totalising project is rarely realised, but it still works as a kind of pressure, or a magnetic pole drawing the humanities towards an orientation that is *essentially* different from that of disciplines that are, by definition, particularistic. The ceaseless activity of *meaning* is central to the project of the humanities. Their domain is constituted by those diverse processes through which we—as individuals who are composed of multiple social identities—cast the phenomenal world into meaningful forms. The humanities seek to address the many ways in which we

narrate the world, appropriate it as event and idea, and seek to transform it

To be fair to the authors of the NEP, the documents, for all their mechanistic/utilitarian orientation, nevertheless betray an awareness the best training in the world will still not amount to education. This shows, most noticeably, in the professed concern with *values*. Somewhat contradictorily, the authors urge 'that the process of education should be reoriented and young people should be made to realise that exploitation, insecurity and violence cannot be contained, nor can an organised society be sustained without adhering to and enforcing some norms of social, political and economic behaviour.' In the very next sentence, however, they call for the inculcation of 'a coherent and *operationally viable* value system'. Needless to say, it is precisely the operational *viability* of many kinds of corrupt and inhumane behaviour that education is called upon, howsoever improbably, to counteract.

It is in the nature of values that they should appear irredeemably obstreperous to the tidy bureaucratic mind, endlessly unamenable to the naive equations of the cost accountants of 'human resource development'. And yet, there is no getting around them, no getting by without them. If people do not acquire 'good', socially desirable values, they acquire 'bad', and in the present degenerate context, 'operationally viable' ones. To dose people with the preferred values in the course of education seems an eminently desirable strategy. But indoctrination with values must be, in essential respects, different from inoculation against, say, cholera—and we haven't done such a good job of that either. Dull and dogmatic lessons in 'moral science', or even catchy commercials for that matter, are bound to fail: people just don't learn their moral values in that way. (Thus, I am confident that the elite institutions in which the current crop of slick operators picked up their minimal education didn't actually *instruct* them in the brazen dishonesty that is their distinction.) The processes through which people actually acquire the values by which they live are obscure, recondite, ultimately mysterious. This is not to say that education has no role to play—but the relevant strategy has to reflect an awareness of this *difficulty*. The utilitarian commonsense that characterises the NEP generally can only be counterproductive in this domain. With Keats, 'we hate poetry that has too palpable a design on us'. The nauseous, moralising tales, the plastic children crammed full of exemplary goodness, are so much junk. We must draw upon all our resources of guile and camouflage and invention, and so trap the unwary into *possible* virtue. And it is to the derelict zone of the humanities that we must turn.

The humanities, in general, are the area of academic/pedagogic activity, where such concerns may even be engaged with the processes by which acts are endowed with meanings, the ramifications which connect causes with distant effects in ways that we deem moral and

immoral. The study of literature has for long been recommended on the grounds that it makes people moral—and condemned, by Plato among others, on the grounds that it makes us immoral. We should treat all such claims, pro and contra, with a generous measure of suspicion. (The example of the concentration camp commandant who returned to Bach and Goethe after a hard day's work at the gas chambers is well-known.) But, where no instrumental prescription is possible, it is still the case that the experience of literature affords an opportunity for the engagement and invigoration of those emotions by which we must, for good and for ill, live. R.W. Hepburn's claim regarding 'The arts and the education of feeling and emotion' is both modest and apt. 'The emotional enlivening proper to the arts may be far less a matter of stimulating particular, specific emotions in the spectator than in dispelling his emotional torpor and inculcating an alert, mobile, exploratory attitude to the play of feeling in the work of art as a whole.'

However, whereas one may be justifiably suspicious of any claims about the ability of literature to inculcate *humanity* in any significant or predictable degree, there is one respect in which literature (and the humanities more generally) are particularly well-suited. Literature and the humanities have a professional commitment to scepticism in respect of all proffered forms of meaning and structures of significance. as such, *they are eminently well-suited as a school of democratic virtue*. Language is among the more notable casualties of the present educational set-up. And it is an index of the current malaise that there is so much dead and dishonest language in public discourse. An alertness to language, to nuance and inflection, to the insidious influence of submerged metaphors and implicit conceptual categories, in a word, the ability to scrutinise critically the symbolic messages, the sign systems of a culture: this is not the least of what one gains from a proper education in the humanities.

I am conscious, however, that the kind of argument that is being advanced here for the pedagogic (and democratic) value of an education in the humanities is not likely to make hearts (?) beat faster in Shastri Bhavan. For all I know, the NEP's implicit strategy of trashing the humanities may well have some such perception—differently evaluated, of course—behind it. But the fact of the matter is that the ruling elite (or coalition, or what-you-will) is faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, there is the spectacle, sickeningly familiar to all, of the alarming slide into violence and brutality, the growing and terrifying sense of anomie, of *drifting* into catastrophe. The myths, the shared narrative systems—hypocritical, partial, perhaps necessarily tendentious and polemical and *therefore* periodically in need of renewal and replacement—have broken down. There is nothing at the centre of a culture in which the quiz (of the machine-readable objective type examination, etc.) is the dominant form of knowledge. Indeed, there is no centre, only a desert with an infinity of discrete

grains of 'information', of facts. The energetically administered panacea of official 'culture'—suitably sanitised and tarted up for export—will not suffice. What is needed is some sort of working consensus—at different levels, different kinds of consensus—about the meanings and significance of what is happening to us, of what we are doing to ourselves. And this process—in which education can, and must, play a part—inevitably involves a politics of reality. It is not even as if we have an option as to whether or not there should be such a politics. It is happening all the time, in the media, on the streets, in the place where Safdar Hashmi was murdered. The only choice which a society can exercise is as to whether or not it will make itself vulnerable to the intervention of the less brutal and more thoughtful means whereby we manipulate the ways in which reality may be thought about and so, made available for action.

By its very nature, this can never be a rigidly controlled process. Culture, if it is to work at all, must involve certain risks. Beyond the purely ornamental functions, culture is inevitably an *argument* about reality. The humanities are only the academic end of this wider process of culture. And in so far as this culture is the means whereby a people enable themselves to transcend the mental (and so, in turn, physical) constraints of the 'given' situation at any point in time, it is inevitably *subversive*. On this account, the conspicuous neglect of the humanities in the NEP appears to be of a piece with the dour petty-mindedness that characterises certain other aspects of the State's emerging attitude to education. And, more generally, to all dissent.

Contrary to the popular assumption, any attempt to revive the humanities at the higher levels, and indeed to make a meaningful humanities input at lower levels, would involve considerable expense. An education in the humanities is particularly unsuited to factory methods of production: it requires an infinitely patient and sensitive attention to the subtle processes by which the world acquires meaning and resonance. The close personal interaction between an older and a younger scholar, the element of apprenticeship, the slowly acquired familiarity with the world of thought and patterned emotion, of music and philosophy. All this is, admittedly, light years removed from the brutalised contexts in which we live: distant even from the range of our conceptions. But it is, in the first instance, a matter of recognising the value and significance of the humanities. Once that is done, we can begin to take up the long-neglected debate regarding the priorities of national expenditure.

But the possibly unaffordable expense is still not the whole story. The present degraded state of the humanities is painfully familiar. But there is an organic difficulty at a level deeper than the academic interests vested in the current degeneration, deeper than bureaucratic fears of academic freedom, deeper than the cost-accountants' blindness to all except short-term monetary criteria. This is the traditional link between the humanities and a certain pattern of social privilege. In the

west, the humanities have been the preserve of ruling-class culture, a privileged domain to which birth and connections gave one access this is the face that Hardy's Jude sees as, excluded, he looks longingly towards the spires of 'Christminster'. But the ways in which the practice of the humanities in the west has been affected by the fact that it embodied and articulated the knowledge deemed appropriate for 'free' men—the 'liberal arts'—in a society in which the majority of people were *unfree* is, still, a *separate* story. Because one would have to be hopelessly romantic—or, better, blind—to suppose that the dominance of our own post-colonial ruling class is mediated through anything indicating a familiarity or even a passing acquaintance with the culture of the humanities. It is only too clear that science and even more *technology* is the core of a new kind of elitism (As for the provincial elites, their dominance is increasingly mediated not through any ideologically engineered consensus—though archaic loyalties of caste and community have served well in their time, and it appears might still have some use left in them—but rather through naked force.) However, in such a situation, there is a historic responsibility that devolves upon the humanities—a responsibility that they are historically ill-equipped to fulfil. It is in the humanities alone that the implicit shapes of our possible futures can be conceived of and thought about, it is here that our nation can awake to self-consciousness. If we are not to go stumbling into the abyss that yawns beyond the glamorous hoarding superfluously announcing the advent of the twenty-first century, the practice of the humanities would itself have to be humanised. It would have to be inflected (and infected) with that hunger for *totality* which is its *raison d'être*, even in these hard times.

INTERVIEW WITH KAMAL DUTTA*

Science Teaching and Research and the New Education Policy

Kamal Dutta It is a widely held view that there have been major failings in the teaching of science and that the quality of scientific output has declined in the last forty years in our country. The hope that the people of this country during the freedom struggle had a flowering of scientific activity of high quality following Independence, has not in fact occurred—neither in terms of quantity nor quality, though primarily in terms of the latter. To cite the instance of Physics, we have not produced any single work of such outstanding merit as to find a place in any subsequent history of the discipline. In contrast to the preceding forty years when the volume of activity was lower and the number of people involved in the teaching of science and scientific research smaller—and yet a number of seminal discoveries reported—post Independence India has not produced any landmark work. There is then some justification in reviewing the failings of the education system in contributing to this lack of achievement.

The remedies suggested by the New Education Policy are unlikely to make a dent, and may possibly worsen the situation. To start at the basic level of school education, the New Education Policy document rightly observes that the kind of science education we now have in schools has largely become a process of rote learning. In fact it is generally accepted that the kind of teaching done even in the best of schools is unlikely to encourage students to study science. The fundamental problem is that the volume of material to be grasped by students has increased enormously, not because the disciplines themselves have increased in volume, but because the education administrators have decided that it is necessary for students to be acquainted with very wide areas. By broadening the base of knowledge imparted, the administrators have created a situation where from very early on science both for the teachers and students in schools, becomes a process of memorising facts. It is of course true that in every discipline of science there is a certain body of knowledge that is basic and which any scientist accepts to a considerable degree, unquestioningly. From early on in life, the student is taught that it is more important to be acquainted at any ordinary level with facts, rather

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than to understand at some depth, a limited range of concepts. And this situation is one which will be rejected by students who by virtue of their intelligence, would be the ones to rebel against this obsession with facts. This situation has replicated itself in Physics, Chemistry and to a certain extent in Mathematics. In Medicine, where the student has to necessarily memorize a large body of facts, the situation is of course different.

A second problem is the de-emphasis on Mathematics in the teaching of science. In any area of science, Mathematics is a fundamental requirement. Societies which have developed enormously in science research and education like the USSR and France, have given special care to the teaching of Mathematics. The only change that has been introduced in the teaching of Mathematics in our country, has been to imitate the more abstract pure Mathematics of American schools. Ironically this experiment of grinding students in pure mathematics did not work in the USA. The problem it could not resolve was that such mathematics was useful in producing only 'pure mathematicians'. By replacing the more traditional variety of mathematics of the routine kind by the American model—which has been dropped even in the US—we have profoundly damaged the possibilities of a creative relationship between physics and the sciences.

The New Education Policy suggests a simple diagnosis and cure. It takes as its model, the (so-called) English medium public schools as they exist in major cities and suggests that their absence in the countryside is the heart of the problem with school education. Accordingly the policy seeks to extend this public school model to the countryside. The Government is willing to provide financial support for such ventures. However some simple facts are forgotten. In post-independence India, such schools in practice have not provided any significant number of scientific workers though the number of such schools has increased significantly. The greatest success of these schools lies in producing a certain familiarity with spoken English and inculcation of a set of urban based Indo-Anglian values rather than excellence in any specific discipline. It is an attitude well-suited to the private sector or senior government jobs or for going abroad. Their potential to contribute to a resurgence of creative activity in Indian sciences is however dubious.

Another aspect to the diagnosis by the New Education Policy has been to question the social relevance of existing science teaching. Articulating the feeling that science today has become remote from social concerns, it counterposes the need to concentrate on certain key areas of scientific development. Thus for the New Education Policy, the real problem seems to be to identify 'thrust areas' related to social needs, and then get scientists and students to work in these areas.

It is true of course, that science in India today is remote from our social needs. The reason for this however, is an over-exposure of Indian scientists to tendencies abroad especially in the USA. The result is a

big craving to imitate US science imitate by telling oneself that this is the only science which is meaningful. In this way there is a tremendous pre-occupation with measuring oneself according to international (primarily US) standards. The upshot is that we, as Indian scientists, do not even attempt to set the fashion. We keep ourselves busy being followers. Unfortunately this is true by and large, even of our very competent scientists. This tendency to be imitative, it is worth adding, is more true of post-independence India. The remedy suggested by the New Education Policy will only aggravate the problem. It is very likely that 'thrust areas' will be defined by looking at fashions in the West. Our real needs, social as well as extra social, will suffer by default.

Equally crucial will be the debilitating effect on the Basic Sciences. Resources will be diverted to the frontier areas of technology. What the policy makers forget however is that innovative technology is an offspring of creativity in the Basic Sciences. A body of scientists and technologists, whose understanding of abilities in the Basic Sciences is minimal, cannot produce high quality innovative technology. So even the relatively narrow objective of producing technology relevant to our needs will remain unfulfilled in the absence of sufficient attention to the Basic Sciences.

The second problem of de-emphasizing Basic Sciences is related to the creation of good teachers. Universities and colleges must regard it as one of their primary functions to produce competent teachers for both universities/colleges as well as schools. Where else are teachers going to come from? Now it is a fact that in schools—even at its upper levels—nothing more sensible than an introduction to certain limited areas of Basic Sciences can be achieved. The student at that level does not have enough exposure to be talking of technological complications. It would be a happy situation if school leaving students are well-versed in some relatively narrow area of the Basic Sciences. But their understanding of these have to be good enough for them to move on to a career in science and technology. But by de-emphasizing Basic Sciences, students will be produced whose grasp over these branches of science would be limited. The result will be school teachers who are incapable of enthusing students in the basic areas of science, who are unable to give students an understanding of what the word 'understanding' means. We now have a large majority of science teachers in schools who explicitly tell the students 'Look, don't waste time understanding these concepts, you will never get them. Memorise them and you'll do well in the examinations. If you come to the stage where you have to think in the examination hall, then you are doomed.' Such advice is doled out by teachers in part because it succeeds (within narrow examination based objectives), but also because they are unable to communicate to the students basic principles in a comprehensible fashion. In this respect some of the major public schools in big cities are the biggest defaulters—they are precisely the ones which collect good

students into groups and instil into them the process of rote learning by giving tests repeatedly. Their students do well in examinations, but few if any move on to creative work subsequently. Far from providing any immediate solution to our social ills, de-emphasizing the Basic Sciences will do a disservice to our technological capabilities. This is part of the reason why in spite of so much inputs into the CSIR, the Defence Research Laboratories, etc., we are still technologically dependent on other nations.

The Experimental Sciences constitute yet another problematic area. It is widely acknowledged that our Experimental Sciences relatively tend to lag behind developments in theory. This is normally ascribed to the paucity of equipment, to the fact that much larger financial investments are required in the setting up of laboratories, that, given the fact that we are relatively a backward society, it is not surprising we should lag behind in areas which require big investments, besides a well developed industrial background for the production of equipment necessary to perform good experiments. There is some truth in this picture. A good experimentalist in this country would probably have to buy a significant portion of his equipment from abroad, a process which is time consuming and puts him a few years behind his colleagues working in places where industry is capable of providing made-to-order equipment of good quality.

But this is only part of the answer. The other part has to do with what happens in our laboratories. In schools and colleges, laboratories are places where students have to do the most uncreative and repetitive exercises. Students are made to repeat experiments done by others, producing standard results which are already known from data sheets. Nor are the laboratories equipped to provide the student with some satisfaction in being an experimentalist or even in allowing him to develop the skills that make a good experimentalist. Moreover a good experimentalist nowadays has to be conversant with theory and with the use of computers. Since equipment is expensive, the design of an experiment has to be carefully thought out before it is actually launched. And to perfectly master the art of designing and having done so, to find that design likely to produce the most successful experiment require inputs and training which are not available. We do not produce scientists who are competent in theory, in computing and in working with their own hands. The result is a crop of imitative experimentalists. A few Indians who have gone abroad have made good experimenters, but the vast majority in our universities are inadequate in this respect. Their capabilities as experimenters are totally unexplored. They have no way of becoming good innovative experimenters later in their career.

As regards theory, the situation is marginally better, new work available through journals (which in the first place may or may not be available) may enable a serious student to develop reasonable

competence as a theorist through his or her own efforts. Bad teaching hampers such a student to a lesser extent.

I think there must be a greater effort in identifying the problems of science teaching in our country. In seeking remedies we have to start with the lowest level in schools.

Question How would you assess the implications of the New Education Policy on university and college education?

K D A big problem I have with the New Education Policy has to do with the idea of autonomous colleges and university departments. It seems to some of us, who have not been involved in the framing of this policy, that these aspects of the policy reflect a very specific identification of the major ills that beset college and university education in this country. The understanding is that college education is losing its quality in attempting to cater to the needs of large numbers of students and what one needs primarily are isolated centres of excellences. These may not be large in number, but they will provide education of a high quality to a limited number of students. The hope is that in time, the benefits of this kind of education will percolate down to the community.

I do not agree with this identification of the problem and with the solution to the problem of quality in college/university education. For one thing, the very concept of an autonomous university department is, in my opinion, the antithesis of everything a good university should stand for. A good university should be composed of a community of students and scholars who work in their own disciplines but who are sufficiently open to influences, to discussion and to the exchange of ideas with people who belong to other disciplines. In this connection it may be recalled that Mathematics owes an immense debt to other disciplines in developing itself, for instance, the Theory of Distributions has been developed from ideas provided by physicists. In a healthy academic atmosphere, physicists will learn to handle mathematics in a rough way but with sufficient accuracy to interest mathematicians to develop or invent a totally new branch of mathematics itself. It is precisely this kind of situation that universities require. But if this is replaced by a structure where departments formulate their own syllabi without discussion with members of the other disciplines, the result would be wastage of creative potentialities.

The second problem is the self-evident one of elitism, especially in undergraduate colleges. In the 'harder' sciences and mathematics, a certain degree of elitism is needed for the requirements of the discipline. For instance, pure mathematics is not meant for those without any aptitude for it. The real problem is at what stage should one use filters to separate those with aptitude for a particular discipline from those who lack it [those societies that have succeeded

in maintaining competent levels of activity in the Pure Sciences] Mathematics does filter out students, but only after having provided an almost universal base for school education of a reasonably high quality. Though schools in the USA are not always of a high quality, at the university/college level they do an enormous amount of basic work in the 'harder' disciplines. The same is true for the Soviet Union where an universal education at the school level permits them to carefully choose students oriented to pure mathematics. The results of such filtration are obvious in the fact that the Soviet Union produces mathematics of a high order, which is reflected in their advances in aerodynamics and space research.

What is wrong with the elitist programme of education that is embodied in the concept of autonomous colleges is that we seem not to recognize that our school education is already a very fine filter. The vast majority of the school going population is filtered out at the school level, because of the lack of means and/or because of lack of opportunities in studying in reasonably good schools. With such a fine filter operating at the school level, elitist and 'quality' institutions at the college level will narrow the availability of 'quality' education to an insignificant fraction of the population.

The autonomous colleges plan is to extend the English medium public school model in our colleges, without realizing that this education has not been able to produce any creative science in the forty years after Independence. Universities today already have a fair number of students coming from these elitist institutions. The addition of further filters can only accentuate the process of marginalising creative scientific activity.

Yet another problem related to the idea of 'thrust areas' in Science and Technology, as well as the creation of autonomous university departments consists of the following. Once 'thrust areas' are identified it naturally follows that institutions, largely the Government which will finance these activities, will pour in money in these areas disproportionately larger than those which have not been similarly designated. Immediately the following question arises: how is one to ensure that these large amounts of public money is fruitfully spent? The answer will be 'well, we'll set up Review Committees, we will make broad based committees taken from universities and research institutions which will periodically monitor the use of these funds. We shall also set up some kind of mechanism for social accountability.' The problem with this kind of a solution is as follows: in the first instance, by identifying a 'thrust area' and pouring in money into it, you are admitting the proposition that a large number of competent people in this area do not already exist, because if such people did exist, the area would have automatically been a 'thrust' one. Now given the fact that there does not exist such a large body of competent people in these areas, what kind of monitoring can go on? The monitoring can essentially be done only by the same people who are at the fund receiving

end A fund receiver in university A will be a monitor for the fund receiver in university B, and both these individuals will be beholden to the Government for the funding of their own research programmes. Now, given the nature of Indian society, given its narrow circle of senior bureaucrats, science bureaucrats, the upper echelons of the major universities, we can easily see that this is small enough circle for sustaining the requisite amount of backscratching. It will not be difficult, given a degree of resourcefulness, to nullify any monitoring process in this situation.

In a scientific community as ours, small and lacking a long tradition of accountability regarding quality, the monitoring of public expenditure is bound to be poor. Take the simple answer to the question, why do we have so few journals which are of the highest standards. A journal in statistics, in astronomy, in astrophysics—the number of good journals can be counted on one's fingertips. Equally important is the fact that the refereeing which goes on for the science journals in our country makes intrinsically lower demands on quality of work. Most referees compare the quality of work with that of their own output which is mostly very modest. The problem is that there are not a large enough body of scientists who are pre-eminent in their fields. In the absence of such a situation, the monitoring process can easily become a circular process of mutual praise. I think it will be very hard, merely by increasing the volume of funds in these areas, to turn them into ones in which work of the highest quality can take place.

Question . Would not the creation of autonomous university departments remove them from even the little check by the university as a whole?

K.D : It is certainly true that just as it has come about that some minority colleges regard themselves as a law unto themselves, the same is likely to happen in the case of autonomous departments/colleges. The autonomous departments will feel that they are answerable to none except the fund giving institutions. They will take pride in their isolation from the rest of the university community, which will cut them off from the broader streams of intellectual activity. In the long run this can only diminish the quality of work that goes on in these institutions.

GEETHA B. NAMBISSAN*
POONAM BATRA**

Equity and Excellence: Issues in Indian Education

A significant trend in recent education policy in the major capitalist countries is the emphasis on excellence and efficiency in education. Couched in various phrases such as 'back to the basics', 'uphold standards', 'upgrade schools' and so on, the stress is on the need for 'quality' rather than 'quantity' in education. Commentators on education link this trend in policy to wider economic and social processes, particularly to the crisis of western capitalism, economic recession, the resource crunch and the corresponding necessity to restructure capital. What is evident, however, is that beneath the rhetoric of excellence is the slow but steady shift away from even a semblance of equity and social justice that was beginning to characterise schooling in these countries in the sixties and early seventies. Commenting on US federal policy, Secada (1986) says '... standards of "excellence" replaced those of equity, ability and selection replaced needs and access, social and welfare concerns were ignored as productivity took the fore.'¹

Indian education policy today also reflects an increasing preoccupation with excellence in education. While the Kothari Commission Report (1968) does refer to the creation of a minimum number of 'quality institutions', the major emphasis was on the equalisation of educational opportunities among different social groups. In the New Education Policy, 1986, almost twenty years later, while we do hear an echo of the need for universal schooling, considerably more pronounced is the concern voiced for 'good quality education', the need to 'sift talent' and to identify and promote 'excellence' at the school stage itself. What appears as a shadowy outline of a shift in policy can be more clearly seen in the Programme of Action and subsequent documents where details are given of Navodaya Vidyalayas—schools that are being established in rural areas with the specific objective of identifying and promoting excellence and talent.

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The present paper attempts to analyse the Navodaya programme in the context of the state of primary schooling in rural India. Focusing on the quantity and quality of education as well as on the economic and social constraints, the paper attempts to show that Navodaya Vidyalayas are likely to widen rather than reduce inequities in education. The emphasis on excellence concretised in Navodaya is not only misplaced but serves to rationalise the shift in resources and priorities that is already taking place away from primary education

The discussion that follows is in two parts:

- The first attempts to outline the state of primary (rural) schooling, to present as it were the educational base from which talent is to be sifted.
- The second analyses the Navodaya programme in the context of excellence and equity in schooling.

SCHOOLING IN INDIA

India is by all estimates an educationally backward country. While barely 36 per cent of the total population is literate, as many as 55.8 per cent (over 1,000 lakh children) between 5 and 14 years of age do not attend schools. More than 80 per cent (i.e. over 857 lakhs) of these children belong to rural areas.² A striking contrast exists between rural and urban India in the context of literacy rates, schooling facilities and enrolment of children at each stage of education. A profile of literacy and schooling in urban and rural India is given in Table 1.

Table 1
Literacy and Schooling: Urban and Rural India

	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>
Literacy rates (1981)		
Total	29.7	57.4
Females	18.0	47.8
Population 5-14 years (1981) (Lakhs)	1401	394
Primary Schools/Sections 1986 (Lakhs)	55.6	7.4
Middle Schools/Sections 1986 (Lakhs)	14.5	4.2
Percentage attending schools (1981)	38.8	65.2
Percentage 'Pucca' Schools (1978)		
Primary	44.5	71.3
Middle	67.3	83.0
Teachers per primary section (1973)	2.4	5.7

Source: Census of India, 1981

Third, Fourth and Fifth All India Education Survey, 1973, 1978 and 1986

It is evident that the sheer quantum of schools available is inadequate (in relation to the population) at the primary stage itself. The urban population, however, has an edge over rural India in the relative magnitude of facilities for schooling, the number of teachers and so on. Moreover, official statistics do not reflect the existence of a minority of elite, 'private' fee paying schools which cater to the top 5-10 per cent of the population in the cities. These include the 'public schools' that continue to be patronised by the urban elite.³

RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLING

The overwhelming majority of rural children (857 lakhs) who do not attend schools, include 480 lakh boys and 377 lakh girls. The age specific school attendance rates given in Table 2 are extremely low, particularly for girl children. They clearly reveal that over 70 per cent of rural children are still not covered by schools. The majority of children aged 5-14 years are in primary schools. While 62 per cent boys and 63.9 per cent girls in primary schools are within the 5-9 years age group, a significant proportion are over 10 years of age. The latter could be either due to late entry in schools (after age 6), stagnation (repetition of a class) or failure (inability to clear the exam).⁴

Table 2
Percentage of rural children attending schools in each age group—1981

Age Group	% Children attending schools		% of school goers = attending primary school	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
5 - 9	39.8	25.9	62.0	63.9
10 - 14	57.6	29.3	38.0	36.1
5 - 14	48.3	27.4	100.0	100.0

* These are percentages of primary school children who fall in each age group
Source: Census, 1981

Among the communities that lag behind most, both in literacy and accessibility to schools are the scheduled castes and tribes. In 1981, the literacy rate among SC was 21 per cent while among ST, it was only 16.4 per cent. In contrast, communities other than the SC and ST had a literacy rate of 41.3 per cent (Census, 1981).

Even though the number of SC and ST students have increased over the years, they still form a very small proportion of the total number of students. This is particularly so at the higher stages of education as seen in Table 3.

Table 3
Enrolment of SC and ST students in schools 1978, 1986 in %

Stage of School	Scheduled 1978	Castes 1986	Scheduled 1978	Tribes 1986
Primary	14.6	17.4	6.3	8.1
Middle	10.5	14.9	3.6	5.1
Secondary		13.4		4.3
High School	8.9	11.5	3.0	2.7

Source: Fourth and Fifth All India Education Survey, 1978, 1986

ACCESS TO SCHOOLING

Primary schools are still not within easy reach of a large section of the rural population. As many as 4.76 lakh habitations (i.e., a population of 1167 lakhs) are without primary schools, while for 1.5 lakh habitations, this basic facility is available at a distance of over a kilometre. As the population slab decreases, the distance at which primary education is available to habitations tends to increase. For instance, practically all (98.1 per cent) habitations with a population of over 1,000 persons have primary schooling. However, habitations which have a population of less than 300 persons and which comprise 55 per cent of the total number of habitations appear to be poorly served by primary school facilities. As many as 3.3 lakh (73 per cent of all) such small habitations do not have a primary school even at a distance of a kilometre.

It is no mere coincidence that these smaller habitations are predominantly populated by SC/ST communities. According to the Third All India Education Survey, as many as 57 per cent of habitations predominantly inhabited by SC communities had a population of less than 300 persons⁵. Only 29.5 per cent of these had primary schooling facilities within the habitation. It has also been observed that as the percentage of SC/ST population in a village increases, the proportion of such villages having primary schools decreases. Where the SC and ST population comprises 90 per cent of the village, the percentage of villages having primary schools falls to 29.4 per cent and 35.71 per cent respectively⁶ (Graph 1). It is hence not surprising that the percentage of illiteracy amongst ST is 86.18 and SC is 81 per cent.

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLING

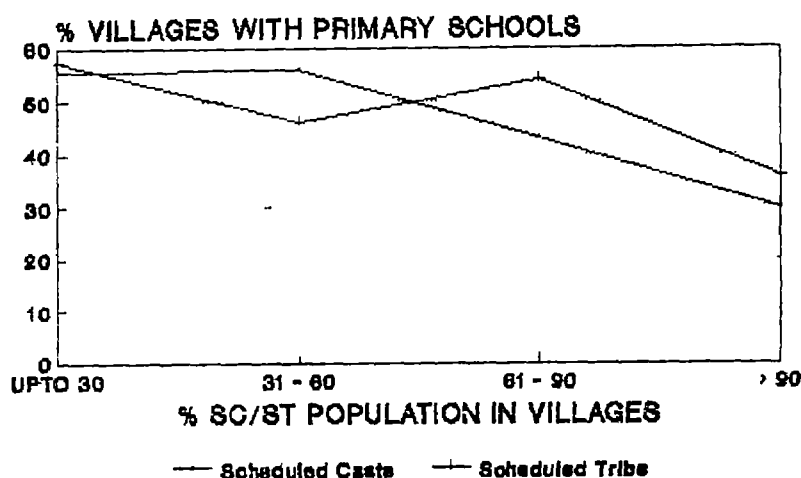
The magnitude of facilities provided for schooling as well as their quality directly depends on the resources set aside for this purpose. In India, Government (Centre, state and local bodies) is the major contributor of funds that go into education.

The outlay on education, however, forms only a small proportion of total plan outlay. In the Seventh Plan, Rs. 638.3 crore that was allocated for education comprised barely 3.6 per cent of the total plan

outlay The share of education has actually declined over the years: from 7.9 per cent in the First Plan (1950-54) to 3.6 per cent in the Seventh Plan (1985-89).

GRAPH 1

PERCENTAGE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS Vs. SC/ST POPULATION IN VILLAGES (1973)



Source: III All India Educational Survey

Within the education sector, the share of elementary education has also fallen in each successive plan. From 56 per cent in the First Plan, the outlay for elementary education fell to 29 per cent in the Seventh.⁷

If non-plan expenditure is also included, the direct expenditure on primary education declines from 40 per cent (Rs. 36.6 crore) of expenditure on education in 1950-51 to 25 per cent (Rs. 594.3 crore) in 1977-78. The relative expenditure on middle schools increases from 8 per cent (Rs. 7.7 crore) to 18 per cent (Rs. 432.4 crore) during the same period. The expenditure on higher education also increased significantly and exceeded that on primary education in 1965-66 itself. This pattern of expenditure reflects a shift in resources (and priorities) away from primary education. This should be seen in the context of the fact that as many as 64.3 per cent students enrolled in all educational institutions are to be found at the primary stage.

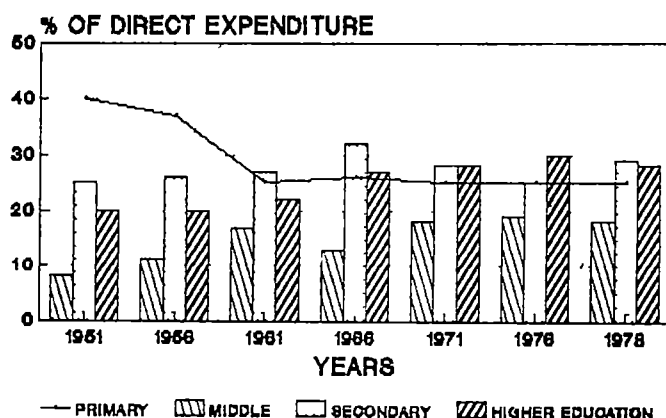
The relatively large proportion of students in primary schools and the meagre resources allocated to this sector makes the institutional expenditure per pupil at this stage extremely low. According to estimates based on 1978 data (the latest that is available), the institutional expenditure (recurring) per pupil is only Rs 127.5 per annum at the primary stage and Rs 167.6 per annum at middle school.⁸

If projections are made for 1987-88, this works out to around Rs 260.9 per annum and Rs 301.4 primary and middle schools respectively. For

universities and institutions a substantially higher per pupil expenditure is incurred—Rs. 12,499 per annum (Table 5)

GRAPH 2

TRENDS IN INTRA-SECTORAL ALLOCATION OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION IN INDIA



Source: Education in India 1977-78

Table 5
Institutional Recurring Expenditure (per pupil), 1978, 1987

Stage	Rs. per annum	
	Recurring cost (per pupil) in	
	1977-78*	1987-88**
Primary	127 3	260 9
Middle	167 6	301 4
Secondary (General)	329 4	628 4
Universities and Institutions	6448 4	12479 5

*Source: Education in India, 1977-78

** These estimates have been worked out using linear regression and are based on trends on per pupil (recurring) expenditure from 1950-1978

Financial data for rural schools is not available separately. A study by NIEPA in the mid-eighties, however, estimates the per pupil (recurring) expenditure for primary schools in tribal areas to be only Rs.100 per annum.

The composition of unit cost (recurring and non-recurring) at each level of education is also indicative of the quality of education offered. In primary schools the salary component works out to around 95 per cent of the total institutional expenditure per pupil. For middle schools, this is marginally smaller. Less than 2 per cent of per pupil expenditure at the primary stage and 3 per cent at the middle stage is spent on buildings, equipment, library and other items that are necessary to improve the quality of schooling facilities¹⁰.

QUALITY OF SCHOOLING

Given the relatively small proportion of resources allocated for primary education, it is not surprising that the quality of education suffers. Majority of schools lack even the basic essentials of what should be the schooling package: a pucca building; separate rooms for each class; a teacher for each class; blackboards and other teaching aids; basic conveniences such as drinking water and toilets.

Available statistics present an appallingly poor state of primary schooling in the country.

-
- 2,00,000 (13 per cent of all) primary schools are without a pucca building.
 - 71,000 primary schools are conducted in open spaces, tents and thatched huts.
 - Only 46,410 primary schools (8.8 per cent of all) have 5 or more classrooms and 40,000 do not have classrooms at all.
 - Less than 50 per cent primary schools have drinking water facilities and only 15 per cent have urinal facilities.
 - 41.5 per cent primary schools are without blackboards.
 - 71.8 per cent are without libraries.
-

Source *Fifth All India Education Survey, 1986

**Fourth All India Education Survey, 1978

While the urban-rural break up is not available for the Fifth Survey (1986), earlier data suggests that rural schools are in a poorer condition than urban schools. For instance, only 44.5 per cent of rural primary schools as compared to 71.3 per cent urban primary schools had a pucca buildings.¹¹

The Report of the Commissioner for SC and ST observes that the quality of inputs and functioning of schools that had a large percentage of SC/ST students, left much to be desired.¹² The report goes on to say that ST dominated talukas had a very high proportion of single teacher schools, and the teaching-learning materials that were available were inadequate and of very poor quality.

The majority of primary schools have either two teachers (32.3 per cent) or are single teacher schools (27.6 per cent). In other words, only 40 per cent of all primary schools have three or more teachers in each school. The official pupil-teacher ratio is shown as 44 at the primary stage. However, in a situation where 60 per cent of all primary schools have less than three teachers, such a ratio is meaningless.¹³

RETENTION IN SCHOOLS

The majority of children who actually enter primary schools tend to drop out well before they complete the entire length of schooling.

While there are methodological difficulties in computing the extent of 'drop-out', rough estimates can be worked out from available data. If for instance, the cohort of 225 lakh students who entered Class I in 1978 is compared with that in Class IX in 1986, a rough idea of those who either left school or 'stagnated' in the intervening period can be gauged. Table 6 shows that 71.6 per cent children who entered Class I in 1978 never reached Class IX by 1986. Among rural children and particularly girls, retention in school is more problematic

Table 6
Extent of 'Drop-out' from Schools (1978-1986)

	Enrollment in Schools* Class I	Class IX	% of Class I students who do not reach Class IX
All Schools	225.2	63.9	71.6
Rural Schools			
a All Students	181.5	36.3	80.0
b Girl Students	71.4	10.2	85.7

* Enrollment figures in lakhs

Source: Fifth Survey, 1986

The rapid decline in enrolment beginning from Class I suggests that a majority of children leave school before completing Class V. For instance, of every 100 students who enter Class I in rural schools, only 45 enter Class V and 35 enter Class VI.¹⁴

Among scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students, the phenomenon of drop-out in primary schools is particularly pronounced. It has been estimated that 59.2 per cent SC students and 74 per cent ST students drop out between Classes I and V.¹⁵

Studies have shown that school drop-outs are mainly from poor and illiterate families. In these families children contribute to varied household activities.¹⁶ Even in the tribal areas, regular school goers are found to have a more favourable background as compared to those who 'drop-out'.¹⁷ What is, however, yet to be analysed is the extent to which non-availability of schools, as well as their poor quality actually accentuates the constraints that disadvantaged children experience in schooling.

Referring to a study of SC and ST drop-outs, the Report observed that 'among the conditions for rejoining schools as mentioned by the parents of drop-outs, the provision of teaching-learning materials and board/lodging rank high'.

LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Only 32 out of every 100 adults in rural India are literate. The number who attain a minimum level of primary education is even smaller. Thus, the majority of rural children who enter school are likely to be first or second generation learners, with all the implications that this can have for the learning environment within the home. This fact

coupled with the conditions under which schooling is carried on makes one wary about the extent to which children 'learn' in primary school.

There are very few research studies that focus on the process and extent of learning in schools. Kurrien quotes a study of 1974, where an attempt was made to test specific skills that children acquire in schools. The analysis of responses of over 8,000 children to specially designed tests, revealed that the average student has poor reading abilities, does not master content areas in mathematics and performs poorly in science. This trend appears more acute among younger children (i.e., among the ten year olds as compared 14 year olds in the sample). It has also been observed that children are neither equipped to go beyond the printed word, i.e., to move from literal comprehension to inferential comprehension, nor to perceive and use mathematical skills in solving practical problems.

Thus, it appears that children who complete primary education may not even acquire mastery over the 3 Rs. In all probability, children who leave school before Class V, lapse into illiteracy. It has been estimated that a minimum of six years of schooling is essential if literacy is to be retained.¹⁹

What emerges from the foregoing discussion is the magnitude of the neglect of primary education particularly in rural India. Poor enrolment, large number of drop-outs and inadequate learning skills among children are not a result of only the social and economic circumstances of families, but are also a product of policy and its priorities. This is most clearly seen in resources allocated to primary education and the inability to bring good quality schooling within reach of every child. That the majority of children do not receive primary education should in itself imply that there are inequalities in education. However, the fact that a significant proportion of girls and children from communities discriminated against, do not go to school highlights inequity—lack of social justice in education. Further, learning at the end of primary school is also suspect.

It is on this 'poor' and unequal base of education that the Navodaya programme seeks to promote both excellence and equity.

II

Navodaya Vidyalayas are middle and higher secondary schools that have been specially formulated in the NPE (1986) to:

- provide quality education to the gifted (high achievers) who have been hitherto deprived of quality education because of socio-economic constraints.
- be pace-setter institutions for the improvement in quality of education in institutions around them in their respective districts.²⁰

According to the NPE (1986) each district must have one Navodaya Vidyalaya. 209 Navodaya schools have already been established by the end of 1988. Admissions to Navodaya are based on an all-India test which is open to rural children who successfully pass the primary school leaving examination and are between 9 and 12 years of age.

The main assumption underlying the programme is that there are 'bright' and talented children, potentially high achievers, who are left uncovered by the present school system. It is assumed that these children have the potential to 'bloom and grow' in future if given good schooling facilities. It is hence necessary to identify this 'talent' through selection procedures that will help meet the twin objectives of excellence and equity. Once such talent has been identified, it is to be nurtured and developed in schools especially set up for this purpose—the Navodaya Vidyalaya.²¹

TESTING FOR EXCELLENCE

The Navodaya Vidyalaya scheme proposes that the achievement of both excellence and equity is possible through selection procedures that are bias-free and in fact inclined towards the weaker sections of society. To ensure this, they claim to use the following criteria.

- (i) no achievement tests are used, so as to prevent bias in favour of children attending 'good schools', or from 'economically better sections of society'.
- (ii) only non-verbal tests of mental ability are used so as to ensure that they are culture-free.
- (iii) 75 per cent of the seats are reserved for children from rural schools, within which some seats are reserved for SC and ST children as well.

A closer look at the selection tests challenge each of these basic assumptions.

The selection tests consist of three major components

- Mental Ability Test – 60 per cent weightage
- Language Test – 20 per cent weightage
- Arithmetic Test – 20 per cent weightage

The Mental Ability Test (MAT) forms the major plank of the selection tests, with a weightage of 60 per cent. The test is particularly crucial because it is assumed to be 'culture-free' by virtue of its non-verbal nature.

However, a careful scrutiny of the MAT reveals that it incorporates assumptions and features not very different from those of standardised intelligence (IQ) tests. The principal underlying assumption is that there is a 'pool of ability', naturally determined, which these 'objective' tests will identify and measure. Spatial ability, the ability to classify, verbal ability and numerical ability (all of which form

sub-parts of the Navodaya selection tests) are abilities that have traditionally been assessed by intelligence tests

Considerable debate has centred around the concept, methodology and ethics of intelligence testing. First, although the level of a person's intelligence is frequently put forward as being a possible reason for success or failure at intellectual tasks, 'intelligence level' is in reality only a descriptive measure, not an explanatory concept.²²

Second, the tests used have been found to be neither 'neutral' nor 'objective'. It has been clearly shown that performance in intelligence (IQ) tests is facilitated or hindered by early family and school influences.²³ However, the Navodaya Report claims that neither the family to which children belong, nor the schools they attend will affect their performance in the test.

Even practice effects are said to be considerable.²⁴ The Navodaya Cell also appears to be aware of these effects. The Report mentions that the information brochure was distributed to candidates hoping such exposure would remove bias in favour of children who were already familiar with objective type tests.²⁵

Authors who have been pioneers in cross-cultural testing have, in the late forties itself, admitted that the search for a 'culture-free' test is illusory. 'The naive assumption that mere freedom from verbal requirements renders a test equally suitable for all groups is no longer tenable'.²⁶ In fact, many are of the opinion that in a society built upon social inequality, tests are used either to mask the reality of 'social heredity' or to justify it. If a culture-free test really existed, it would serve neither of the two purposes. The Navodaya tests are likewise based on tasks which derive meaning in western (urban) cultures and are modified to the extent of translation into the vernacular. They are designed along western (urban) modes of education and methods of categorisation and contain pictorial and symbolic representations that still form part of intelligence tests.

Most of the items given under each part of the Mental Ability Tests have often been used to assess what is popularly known as 'abstract intelligence'. Abilities such as logical reasoning and classification (odd one out), spatial reasoning (space visualisation), keen observation and a sense of precision (figure matching) form as much a part of traditional tests of intelligence.

Although the Navodaya Cell claims that no achievement tests are used in order to avoid any bias in favour of children coming from better schools and homes, the language and arithmetic tests are no different. The Report inadvertently admits this when it states that 'the poor performance of candidates on the arithmetic test, is also indicative of unsatisfactory state of teaching arithmetic in our schools'.²⁷ The Report also admits that '... the performance on language test' in some states is likely to be adversely affected, because the children had to take the test in the language of the school, rather than their mother-tongue.²⁸

Candidates are even expected to read the elaborate instructions themselves, understand the complex examples and attempt questions. In the light of observations that many children are not even equipped to go beyond the printed word,²⁹ such an administrative method puts these children at a disadvantage at the initial stage itself.

What emerges from our discussion is the following:

- under the guise of a different name, the Navodaya Selection Test is essentially the notorious IQ test
- the Selection Test is neither 'culture neutral' nor 'class neutral' as claimed. Abilities required to succeed in tasks laid down in the test have been highlighted by researchers as having developed in cultures which are technologically advanced, urbanised and largely literate.³⁰

Hence, it is not innate cognitive abilities or 'natural talent' that is likely to be reflected in the test performance but largely the previous learning experiences that children have been exposed to

THE SIFTING OF TALENT

Rural children who successfully complete the primary school examination and are between 9 and 12 years of age, are eligible to compete for admission to Navodaya schools. In educational terms, this means that such children should have entered Class I between ages 4 and 7 and progressed smoothly through primary school

Our earlier discussion suggests that only a small proportion of children who enter rural schools are likely to complete primary school. An even smaller percentage is likely to pass the examination before age 12. The eligibility criteria for the Navodaya Selection Test thus ensure that the majority of children entering rural schools are 'objectively' eliminated well before the actual selection for the school takes place.

Around 2.6 lakh children took the Navodaya selection in 1987, i.e., only 2 per cent of the 141.8 lakh children in Class IV of rural schools in 1986.³¹ The results of the Selection Test conducted in 1987 reveal that the general performance of students in all the test components has been significantly poor. However, younger children (aged 9 and 10) appear to have fared better than older children (aged 11 and 12). Referring to the older children (who comprised the majority of candidates) the Technical Report states that 'children of age group 11 and 12 in grade V would either be late starters or grade repeaters and therefore their scores are not very high.' Not surprisingly, only 13,804 children, barely 5 per cent of the total number of children who took the test in 1987, were successful.

What does the Selection Test objectively do? Does it identify potential that is naturally given or does it merely reveal, most starkly, the appalling state of what goes in the name of primary education in rural India? As mentioned earlier, the Report itself laments the unsatisfactory state of teaching arithmetic in schools and the gap

between home and school language. If teaching at the primary level can facilitate or hinder the performance of educational tasks (i.e., the test), it follows that children selected for Navodaya Vidyalayas are not necessarily 'innately superior' (if there is such a characteristic) or more 'talented' than the majority who do not. In all probability, they are the few who have had better schooling conditions and a home environment conducive to formal learning. The poor educational base in rural India thus makes the emphasis on excellence (even if limited to performance in tests) meaningless. In fact, what Navodaya schools are attempting to do in practice is to provide better schooling facilities and a learning environment for a minority of children.

NAVODAYA SCHOOLING

Navodaya children are entitled to free residential 'quality' education. Quality education has been elaborated to mean the provision of the best facilities associated with both curricular and extra-curricular school activities. For instance, well equipped laboratories and libraries, modern education aids including television and micro computers as well as facilities for sports, cultural activities and so on. Further, committed and competent teachers are considered to be a crucial input.³² It is obvious that the Navodaya schools as envisaged require considerable funds. The construction cost of each Vidyalaya is estimated to be around 2.3 crores.³³

The Navodaya programme is to be fully financed by grants from the Central Government under plan expenditure. In 1987-88, Rs. 69 crore was approved to be spent on Navodaya under plan expenditure. The total amount actually spent on 209 Navodaya Vidyalayas in 1987-88 was more than Rs. 83 crore.³⁴ In view of the fact that the entire budgeted (plan) expenditure on school education was less than Rs. 450 crore in the same year, it appears that a few Navodaya Vidyalayas are receiving a disproportionate share of educational funds.

The composition of institutional expenditure on Navodaya is also qualitatively different from the usual primary and middle schools. While staff payments do comprise a major component of recurring expenditure, unlike primary and general middle schooling, the effort has been to select the best teachers from Central and public schools. Attractive incentives are given to teachers who are provided opportunities for in-service training as well. Thus, the per pupil expenditure (recurring) on Navodaya Vidyalayas works out to as much as Rs. 5,250 per annum. In contrast, the expenditure on primary and general middle schooling (as mentioned earlier) is almost negligible.

Non-recurring expenditure on the Navodaya Vidyalayas is also relatively large. In addition to land, building and maintenance costs, there is substantial expenditure on craft and sports equipment, teaching and audio-visual aids, laboratory equipment and on band and music instruments as well. Curricular and extra-curricular activities are also

items of substantial expenditure. In primary and middle schools, expenditure under such heads is negligible.

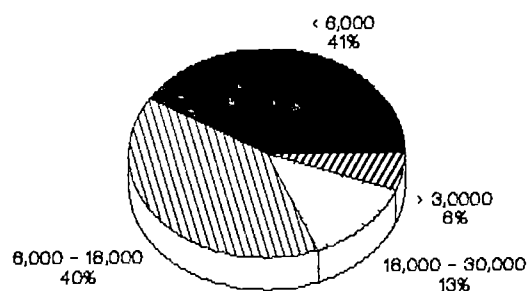
WHO GOES TO NAVODAYA?

Around 79 per cent of the 13,804 children admitted to Navodaya Vidyalayas in 1987-88 were from rural primary schools. Of those admitted, 17 per cent belonged to scheduled castes and 12 per cent were from scheduled tribe communities. Only 23 per cent of Navodaya entrants were girls.

Navodaya children come from families that are mainly engaged in the 'service' sector (47.6 per cent). While 18 per cent families are involved in labour, 10 per cent are engaged in business.³⁵

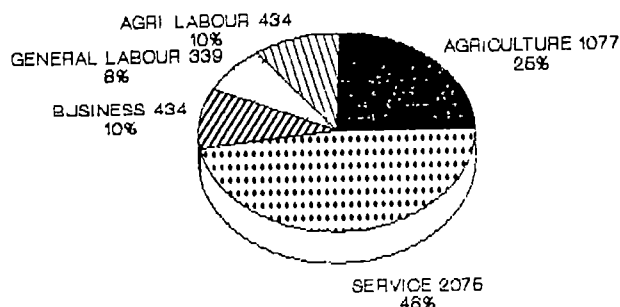
The annual income of 40 per cent of families of children is less than Rs. 6,000 per annum.³⁶ Thus, 60 per cent families whose children are in Navodaya Vidyalayas are above the official poverty line. Around 37 per cent receive an annual income of more than Rs. 12,000 a month.

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF NAVODAYA ENTRANTS (1987-88)



ANNUAL INCOME OF PARENTS (Rs.)

Source: NVB



OCCUPATION OF PARENTS

Source: NVB

While the economic status of the families of Navodaya entrants does suggest that they come from relatively well-off backgrounds, it is the educational standards of mothers that is particularly striking. In contrast to the average rural family where illiteracy among women is predominant, as many as 57 per cent of mothers of Navodaya entrants have attained primary education. Around 18 per cent have completed high school while 6 per cent have graduated as well. The education levels of mothers speak volumes for the kind of early learning experiences that Navodaya must have.³⁷ These factors suggest that rural children who enter Navodaya Vidyalayas tend to come from literate and relatively well-off backgrounds.

WHY NAVODAYA?

The educational base of the rural school system is, as we have seen, poor, both in terms of the quantity and quality of schooling. Not only is the distribution of the relatively small proportion of children who complete primary school skewed against the more disadvantaged strata, their grasp of basic skills is woefully inadequate. The latter is most clearly reflected not merely in stagnation and failure in primary school, but also in the fact that 95 per cent of those who took the Navodaya test in 1987 were unsuccessful.

The official attempt to ignore this educational reality and continue to emphasise the selection and promotion of talent at the middle school stage (and allocate substantial funds for this purpose) hence appears suspect. This is more so because of the clear link that exists between the quality of the learning experience that children receive at school (and at home) and their performance. Why then are Navodaya Vidyalayas the educational priority today (both in terms of funds and attention)?

It is tentatively suggested that Navodaya Vidyalayas receive the attention they do because they objectively serve specific interests and are primarily politically (and not necessarily educationally) expedient. The pattern of expenditure, the emphasis on all-round development and the residential nature of Navodaya Vidyalayas suggest that they are to become the rural public schools of tomorrow.

There is among the rural elite a growing awareness of the prestige and social influence that 'good quality', public schooling confers. In the late sixties itself, there are references to wealthy farmers 'who have acquired vernacular schooling and are now the first generation seeking a public school education'.³⁸ A significant proportion of the rural-urban migration in coastal Andhra, for instance, is specifically attributed to the desire of rich farmers for good education for their children.³⁹ Rao also suggests that wealthy farmers and 'service' castes are equally concerned about the quality of education their children receive. In fact, she refers to the engaging of tutors by families in cases where available education is poor.⁴⁰

In addition, there are also the rising aspirations of the middle peasants, who are today becoming restive and politically assertive. This section is increasingly aware of the benefits of modern education particularly in the context of job opportunities. It is probably in response to these aspirations that political parties with a rural base are making good quality education a major item on their charter of demands. The Bharatiya Kisan Union, for instance, has, as a part of its manifesto, the demand for centralised education.

It is our hunch that Navodaya Vidyalayas are a response of government to growing pressures from the rural elite and political parties for 'good quality' schools for their children. The way in which the Navodaya programme has been conceived, the stage at which it is to be implemented and the manner in which children are selected ensures that they are to serve the interests of the more privileged strata in rural India. The emphasis on talent and the mental ability test to select achievers, successfully shifts the blame of failure (of majority of children) from the school to the individual child who either is not eligible for the test or (supposedly) lacks the mental abilities required to pass it.

In conclusion it must be reiterated that we do not argue against good quality schooling in rural areas. On the contrary, our attempt has been to emphasise the fact that the rural population has suffered in this context. However, the Navodaya programme, its underlying assumptions and tests, need to be questioned. The plea of promoting excellence and sifting talent is likely to be used to justify an increasing diversion of funds to a few so-called 'quality' institutions. In the process, general schooling is likely to suffer greater neglect. What will this mean for the majority of children—equity, excellence or neither?

NOTES

- 1 Secada, W G, 1988 *Equity in Education*, The Falmer Press, New York, p 1
- 2 *Census of India*, 1981
- 3 De Souza, A 1974, *Indian Public Schools*, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, Delhi
- 4 Age specific enrollment ratios calculated in Government documents are surprisingly high in contrast to what is presented in Table 1. In 1981, the age specific enrollment ratio for the 6–11 age group was calculated to be as much as 82 per cent (*Education in India*, 1980–81, Vol 1). This over estimation of enrollment in this age group results from the official procedure of taking all primary school goers to the between 6 and 11 years of age. However, given the phenomenon of over-age, this cannot be the case. Official enrollment ratios thus considerably under-estimate the population of children who are not covered by primary schools.
- 5 Third All India Education Survey, NCERT, 1973. Statistics for habitations with less than a population of 300 persons are available for the year 1973 only.
- 6 The spread of middle schools is even more limited than primary schools. Only 29.9 per cent of rural habitations (with a population of over 500 persons) have middle schools within them. Among SC and ST communities, the percentage of such habitation is 15 per cent and 26 per cent respectively. Fifth All India Education Survey, 1986.
- 8 *Education in India*, 1977–78, Vol II

72 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

- 9 NIEPA, 1985, *Educating Tribals*
- 10 Tilak, J B G, 1987, *Educational Finances in India* in *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, Vol 1, nos 3&4, p 179
- 11 *Fourth All India Education Survey*, 1978
- 12 *Report of the Commissioner for SC and ST* - 1986-87, p 300
- 13 *Fifth All India Education Survey*, 1986
- 14 These figures are obtained from enrollments in each class at the primary stage *Fifth All India Education Survey*, 1986
- 15 Source. *Report of the Commissioner for SC and ST*, 1986-87, p 312-313
- 16 Seetharamu, A S and Devi, U, 1985, *Education in Rural Areas—Constraints and Prospects* Ashish Publishing House Delhi
- 17 *Report of the Commissioner for SC and ST*, 1986, p 300
- 18 Kurrien, J (1983), *Elementary Education in India, Myth Reality, Alternative* Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd,
- 19 Roy, P and Kappor, J M (1978), *The Retention of Literacy*, Macmillan, Delhi
- 20 Navodaya Vidyalaya Selection Test, 1987-88, *Technical Report II*, 1988 This report is subsequently referred to as *Technical Report*, 1988
- 21 *Ibid*, p 2
- 22 Howe, J A, 1988, *Intelligence as an explanation*, *British Journal of Psychology*, 79, 349-360
- 23 Clarke and Clarke, (1976) for instance, found an upward shift of about 12 points in IQ amongst children who went to more 'academic' schools Clarke, A M and Clarke, A D B, *Early Experience—Myth and Evidence*, Open Books, London
- 24 Vernon, (1969) The average rise in IQ which was obtained from a limited amount of instruction in the technique of answering questions was as much as 14 points Vernon, P E, *Intelligence and Cultural Environment* Methuen, London
- 25 *Technical Report*, 1988, p 9
- 26 Good enough, 1950, quoted in Michel Schiff & Richard Lewontin's *Education and Class The irrelevance of IQ Genetic Studies* OUP, 1986
- 27 *Technical Report*, 1988, p 54
- 28 *Technical Report*, 1988, p 29
- 29 Kurrien, J, *op cit*
- 30 Cole M, and Scribner, S (1974), *Culture and Thought*, Wiley, New York
- 31 *Technical Report*, 1988, p 10-11
- 32 All expenses of students including boarding, lodging, uniforms, books and transport are met Teachers are also given incentives such as accommodation, free education for their children, etc
- 33 *Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, Annual Report*, 1987-88, p 13
- 34 *Ibid*, p 47
- 35 The information on the background of Navodaya students was obtained from the Navodaya Samiti and pertains to those admitted in 1988 The term 'service' although not defined, probably refers to jobs in the Government and school sector
- 36 Declared incomes are often under-estimates, particularly among land owning and trading communities It is only 'service' incomes that are declared completely
- 37 Though 81 per cent of mothers have primary and higher levels of education, 80 per cent do not work This suggests that Navodaya children probably belong to the traditional dominant and upper caste groups among whom the education of women is not discouraged while seeking work is
- 38 De Souza, A, 1974, *Indian Public Schools*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi
- 39 Upadhyay, B C, 1988, 'The Farmer Capitalists of Coastal Andhra Pradesh', *EPW*, July, 1988
- 40 Rao, S V, 1985 *Education and Rural Development* Sage Publishers, New Delhi

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N. SUBRAMANIAN*
RASHMI PALIWAL*

The New Dispensation and School Education—the Limits of Development without Democratisation

I

Universalisation of education was the slogan with which we started after Independence. It is now more than four decades and elementary education has not reached more than 50 per cent of our children.

The National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE) not only scales down the demands placed in this respect but also pushes further away the deadline for achieving these goals. 'Taking a more practical view of the matter NPE limits itself to proposing that all children by time they attain the age of 11 years will have had five years of schooling, or its equivalent through the non-formal stream, and likewise it will be ensured that free and compulsory education upto 14 years of age is provided to all children by 1995. for some years to come we should have no objection so long as children complete 5 years of education. by the time they complete about 14 years' (*Programme of Action*, pp 10-13)

What is more, the government abdicates its responsibility for achieving universalisation of elementary education. The government concedes that it cannot ensure schooling for the vast mass of children forced to work to augment family income. This abdication of responsibility is camouflaged by loud pronouncements about non-formal education (NFE). NFE is now expected to do what formal school system has failed to do. 'Now faced with other constraints NFE is being assigned a very large responsibility. It is expected that of the additional 64 million children coming up for elementary education, nearly 39 million will be educated entirely through this system' (*Challenge of Education*, p 40). 'It has been assumed in the policy that a large number of out of school children are unable to avail themselves of the benefits of schooling because they have to work. NPE proposes taking up of a large and systematic programme of nonformal education for these children' (*Programme of Action*, p 9-10).

It is rather difficult to believe that the framers of this policy are not aware of the reality of the NFE programme: the dismal performance is too glaring for that. Vast majority of the nonformal

* Ekalavya, Hoshangabad

centres are either fictitious or function erratically. There is no mechanism or commitment to ensure that they work. An instructor is expected to be motivated enough to work on a pittance. All that the NPE proposes to change in the situation is: 'Modern technological tools—such as solar packs for provision of power in NFE centres, audio-visual aids, radio cassette players—will be used' (*Programme of Action*, p. 17)

There is no attempt to grasp or grapple with the problems attending upon NFE. Under such conditions turning over the working children to nonformal sector is as good as washing one's hands of them.

There is a more pernicious meaning behind this abdication of responsibility towards universalisation of education. The government now clearly sees a divide between children who have the leisure to attend school and children who have to work. The formal schools are for the former and the latter are left to fend for themselves.

Abdication of responsibility for universalisation of education at this juncture is also an affirmation and an attempt to maintain social hierarchies and freeze social mobility generated by education. Today by and large formal education has reached out to vast majority of the middle classes and middle peasantry. The attempt now is to freeze the movement here.

The real meaning of Operation Blackboard (O B) can be understood in this context. The sudden injection of massive funds into primary schools to provide for basic minimum needs (building, 2 teachers per school, equipment, toys, books, etc.) is in itself highly welcome. After all these schools have been starved of any funds all these years making a mockery of primary education. Yet it is also a clear statement by the government that it will spend only on children with leisure.

The much publicized Navodaya Schools also are likewise an abdication of responsibility towards the majority of middle school children. The creation of heavily funded model schools for a microscopic minority of so called 'bright' children of the district is at the same time an open declaration that the government cannot and will not provide access to decent education to the multitude of middle school children. Here again we have creation and affirmation of hierarchies and controlling mobility generated by education. We will now have 'bright' children graduating from Navodaya schools enjoying premium over the 'not so bright' brethren in the market for higher education and employment, much the same way as the public school alumni.

The school education system had to wait for 40 years to be favoured with such massive investment of funds. Now the funds are available, but they will be used not to eliminate discrimination and hierarchy in education, but to further intensify them.

In a sense the programme of universalisation of education has reached its 'natural limits' under existing social conditions. Having covered children of the upper classes, the middle and lower middle class and to a large extent the middle peasants the educational system

has come face to face with the fundamental barrier that divides the proletarian and propertied classes. Rural landlords and Kulaks need child labour and adult labour which they will prefer to be uneducated. No programme for universalisation of education can succeed without their patronage and support under the existing rural order. Of course landlords and Kulaks don't have much reason to extend such support.

The proletarian parents cannot afford the luxury of a compartmentalized world. Education when divorced from material income or fight for social emancipation can be a meaningless waste of time to them. To really involve them in the process of universal education one needs to break the hegemonic influence of those who control the rural world. Thus an education programme that seeks to reach out to the working children of poorest parents has to get involved in wider social questions, if it has to be effective.

Either an attempt at universalisation of education generates social upheaval or a social upheaval clears ground for universalisation of education. We have several examples of the latter—USSR, China, Cuba and now Nicaragua. One is yet to come across an example of the former. It may be of interest to note that universalisation has also been achieved in the context of neocolonial dictatorships as in S. Korea. Even here it was accompanied by effective land-reforms.

The reluctance and inability of the government to undertake any effective step in the direction of universalisation is thus understandable. It requires a largescale mobilisation of the poorest strata in changing the existing order of things. It requires an administrative structure that responds to and is sympathetic to popular needs—in short it requires an all out attack on rural power structure and a fundamental transformation of the state machinery. A ruling class that retained the old colonial state structure and refused to carry out radical land reform or allow the masses a free hand in fighting their old exploiters cannot be expected to disturb such a hornets nest.

It may sound hackneyed to trace all troubles of our times to class character of the state. Nevertheless we cannot shy away from the basic facts of our society. How deeply these basic factors influence the day to day running of our schools and educational institutions can be understood easily by those who are in close touch with them. We present here some of our experiences in the schools we have been visiting regularly and working with in the last few years. These are culled from our diaries and memories spread over several years. The intention is not to disparage a particular school, or a teacher or bureaucrat. These are merely representative of our whole school system.

II

Fulkhedi. This is a small village in the neighbourhood of Hoshangabad town. The school has an enviable asset—a building of two rooms with a concrete roof. But the district education officer had given written orders to the effect that the headmaster of the school will hold the school at his own risk during rainy season. Reason : rain waters used to drip from the ceiling and it was likely to collapse anytime Reason: someone who built the school used substandard material. This was the situation for the last five years and only this winter, the school was repaired - how safe it is now will be known during the rains

The school desperately needs maps and globes The total cost will be less than Rs 150. The school collects from every child a modest fee, precisely so that such needs can be met with However the head master does not want to spend this amount because there would be some or the other audit objection, he would have to call tender and seek permission from the district officer for spending over Rs 100 He would rather wait for supply from the district office where he believes lies a large undisbursed stock of maps.

The school closes down on flimsiest of pretexts, marriage or death in the village, the unending list of Hindu festivals, visit of a minister to the neighbourhood Recently a powerful MLA visited the neighbouring town The local cell of the ruling party decided to demonstrate its strength Jeeps went about calling on all educational institutions to close down and send their children and teachers to the public reception Of course no formal orders were issued by the authorities but the teachers were wise enough to close down the schools

The headmaster of this school also runs a nonformal centre of about 20 children He gets a monthly stipend and will get some money when a nonformal student passes the class VIII public examination However he actually runs no nonformal centre but sends these children to his regular school to be taught gratis by the regular teachers during regular school hours.

Hasilpur This village offers an interesting contrast The teachers are under constant surveillance of the villagers The school opens and closes down at regular hours, the teachers take classes conscientiously What always surprised us in this school is a free and friendly—almost equal relationship between the teachers and students The teachers address the children with the familiar '*aré yar*' The children are extremely vocal and lively and assertive, something totally absent in most other schools Part of the reason for this is the control of the villagers over the school The teachers know that they are at the pleasure of the villagers and the children also know this This changes the whole nature of student-teacher interaction In most schools the teacher is the

representative of power and authority cowing down the children and disciplining them.

We deliberately use the term 'villagers'. The village has a rather egalitarian land distribution in the sense that there is no overwhelmingly large landowner. There are one or two big landlords, but then there are a large number of medium land owners. Thus the influence over the school is not restricted to one family but a large number of families.

However the egalitarianism of the village should not be seen as absolute. There is a substantial number of Harijan families and the school itself is just next to the Harijan settlement and well. The school children would rather fetch water from a distant well than use the well just next to the school. Fetching water is a job that can't be done by the Harijan children nor can they touch the water. Any attempt at liberalisation by the teachers immediately brings the wrath of the villagers.

A large number of Harijan children don't attend the school at all. They occasionally peep in from the window, only to hear insults and meet hostile glances, and they respond by urinating on the walls and throwing stones into the class room. Those that do attend the school always sit at the end of the class playing a passive role as the girls.

In fact two of these Harijan students were selected for Navodaya school. One of them jumped the gate and ran 12 kilometres back after a fortnight there.

One morning the teacher is telling the students about the facilities in the Navodaya schools—free dress, free boarding and lodging, trips to various places—children listen intently in disbelief and fascination. Somehow the conversation drifts to recent increase in prices of text books published by the Text Book Corporation. The price has been raised from Rs 4 to 7 in a single stroke. The children complain. Their faces resentful, aggrieved, and uncomprehending.

Gumani This is a model village and is marked as such on the toposheet. The school building, an unusually good one, in good state of repair, is just opposite the Bakhar (mansion) of the Patel. He is known as the *Bade Patel* or the Big Patel. We go to the school one day to find his son sitting there. We want to sell a children magazine which carries a translation of Tolstoy's story, *How much land does a man need among other things*. The younger Patel skips through the magazine and promptly remarks, '*yeh to communist vichar ka hai*'.

There is a very close interaction between the school and the Patel. He had built the school and had actually laid the bricks himself. Any visitor to the school gets entertained at his household, including a delegation of Chinese educationists. The teachers from outside the village when they stay overnight are provided boarding and lodging in his house. Of course the children of the Patel get special coaching from the teachers at their home. The Patel's influence keeps the school well

cared for—building in good repair, enough teachers and teaching materials, etc. But it also keeps away unwanted elements.

Ramlal used to teach in Guman. He is known to be a good teacher and was regularly called upon to impart training to other teachers. The year after general elections he was abruptly transferred to a village 30 km away. The reason he had fallen out with the Patel. Sources close to the Patel allege that Ramlal had campaigned for an opposition candidate while the Patel was backing the Congress (I) candidate. Ramlal, however, maintains that he was transferred because he refused to give tuition to the Patels' children. Today Ramlal is losing his interest in teaching. He runs from pillar to post to get his transfer cancelled or at least to get himself posted in a nearby village so that he can attend to his fields. While the highest education authorities express their inability to help him, the district education officer tells him that he can get his posting orders provided he gets a no objection letter from the Patel.

Once we decided to start a children's library in the school. On a Republic Day the library was formally inaugurated. Our initial gift of 50 books was handed over to the headmaster, who with absolute ease and comfort, gave all of them to the Patels' son. It took nearly one month of our effort to get the books to be given to the other children.

The social structure of the village makes itself felt in other ways too. The school when approached always gives one a feeling of closed school. No noise, no merriment of children can be heard. Most of the students are adivasis and a handful of upper caste children—the natural superiors. The teachers address themselves to the latter and are convinced that the adivasi children are a dull burden. 'Gondi' (Gond child) is a derisive term indicative of dullness and backwardness.

This school serves about 4 to 5 villages and the total strength of the school is not more than 150—not even a third of children who ought to be attending the school.

One must point out here that this school and its relation to the Patel is more liberal than most such similar situations. The Patel of Guman is not as crass or as openly oppressive as rest of the big men who lord over the countryside.

Itarsi. This school is an examination centre for a public examination. Word gets around that the invigilator has been too strict in one of the examinations. A teacher has gone to help his students but wasn't allowed to do so. Half a dozen teachers are fretting and fuming and planning retaliation so that the invigilator's students meet the same fate.

Actually they are their tuition students. The teachers prefer not to teach in the classroom and ask those who can pay to come to their home for tuition. Nothing much is taught in the tuition class either. Only the teacher will ensure that they pass the board examinations.

Kesla. Some months back adivasi women and children of a nearby village marched down to the office of the block education officer demanding that the only teacher posted to the village school attend the school regularly. (Posting to schools in tribal areas is considered a punishment and many teachers do not attend them at all. These schools being some what inaccessible, no one even checks or ensures attendance.) The adivasis sat outside the office for a whole day without anyone coming out to meet them. The next day the women decided to block entry into the office forcing the officials to promise that the teacher will attend the school. However an FIR is filed by the official about obstruction of public servants in their work. After months of harassment three of their leaders have been sentenced to imprisonment.

Polaria. Recently one of the highest educational officials in the state went on a tour of inspection. He was keen to see a nonformal centre at work. 'Arrangements' were made by the district educational authorities to take him to the centre at Polaria, which is considered the best. The centre is supposed to run in the evenings so a jeep sped to that village in the evening with the high official. They reached the spot to find that the centre in charge could not even muster enough children to put up a show. The officials mumbled, 'it is a very cold night, how can children come on such a night? One should be understanding after all.'

SCERT. The State Council of Education and Training had to prepare new textbooks for class VI under NEP. A large number of school teachers were called to Bhopal to write these books. They spent weeks of hard work and produced some books. When the books were printed, they were not the ones written by the teachers but lifted straight from NCERT books. The SCERT did not even have the courtesy to inform the teachers that their work has been rejected, let alone discuss with them the reasons for the decision.

Navodaya Teachers. Navodaya Vidyalaya organisation holds workshop with Eklavya and Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) teachers. They wish to adopt our teaching method in the books that are being developed for the Navodaya Vidyalaya. In the course of the workshop a very pertinent and crucial question crops up, 'if we teach scientific concepts through activities and experiments, it will not be possible to finish this course but we have to follow the syllabus made by NCERT.' What is to be done? We and the HSTP teachers suggested that the activity material as well as the prescribed NCERT book should be tried out for a year. On the basis of experience in school, the teachers should suggest what the syllabus should be like and which concepts are too difficult for children and should be left out.

Navodaya teachers are hesitant. They say yes, what you say is right but we can't do this kind of thing. The course and teaching material is set and decided by NCERT and the Navodaya Committee.

Actually, we do not have the atmosphere of putting up our suggestion and feedback.

HSTP teachers share with them their experience of discussing and changing chapters written by us their experience of the growth of confidence and self-esteem and spirit of democracy, equality in them which enables them today to be unmindful of the authorities

Profile of corruption Under conditions where democratic pressure is absent, corruption is an easy way to get things done. Today our education system is getting caught deeper and deeper in the web of corruption. The teachers collect money from students in the name of tuition, do not teach for the whole year and facilitate mass copying. The teachers in turn pay up the block level or district level officials for getting their transfer or getting transfers cancelled, clearing of TA, DA bills, etc. These officials in turn pass on a share to those higher up.

Thus growing corruption can be seen as a result of decline in moral values. It would however be more meaningful to see it as a result of the process of commercialisation under conditions where no democratic power exists. Teachers and officials faced with a consumerist and careerist onslaught are forced to maximize their incomes one way or the other. As such we are getting into a situation where honesty is becoming a freak virtue and corruption the normal way of life.

The result is the increasing privatisation of the public education system—a process similar to that observable in the public health system.

III

The foregoing snippets indicate the kind of problems faced by our school education system and their relation to broader social contexts. Overwhelming bureaucratism, control exercised by local power wielders, casteism, penetrating influence of capital via corruption, deep rooted resistance to change, utter disrespect and contempt for the teachers and their labour in the hierarchy—one can list them endlessly and perhaps trace each of them to the character of the society and its ruling classes. The basic fact is staring in our face that without launching an all out struggle for democratisation improving the education system is impossible. We therefore needn't be surprised about the silence of otherwise candid NEP documents on these issues.

How then does the NEP come to terms with these real problems?

Bureaucracy and the NEP But for oblique references the NEP documents have little to say about the debilitating role of the bureaucracy. It may be worth quoting one such early reference: 'In a decentralised system of management, the education bureaucracy will lose some of its privileges and prestige which emanates from their power to dispense patronage...and centralised purchase'.

Where bureaucracy attacks and claims to undermine itself then one can be sure that more bureaucracy is in creation. The NEP documents grow eloquent over their proposals for 'decentralized management of education'.

This will consist mainly in the creation of district boards of education and district institutes of education and training. These will be mainly responsible for (a) drawing up plans for centrally formulated educational schemes, (b) drawing up plans for the district, and (c) exercise of administrative and financial control.

IV

Innovative Education Programmes and Voluntary Agencies

We must seek to understand the government's newfound enthusiasm for voluntary agencies in the context of its own utter inability to run the education system effectively, let alone innovate in it. It may be worth our while to pause here and understand the experience of a major voluntary effort towards innovative education programme—the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme.

The Experience of HSTP

The HSTP was begun in 1972 by a group of scientists and science teachers with the aim of making science learning a joyful experience for the children and emphasising the acquisition of certain basic skills and concepts in science learning. They were lucky to get the support of the administration to intervene in the government school systems. This began the endeavour to build a large scale innovative programme affecting not a few model schools, but the vast majority of normal government schools.

This experiment which began in 16 schools of Hoshangabad district now covers over 450 schools spread out in about 14 districts of the state.

There were two corner stones of the programme: 1. Children should learn science by performing the experiments themselves and discussing it among themselves and with teachers, 2. The teachers should have an important role in revising and changing the material on the basis of their experience.

Both the principles have immense political implications and also make enormous demands upon the educational bureaucracy.

If children are encouraged to learn through experiments and discussion, the entire power structure in the class changes, with the teachers no longer being the fountainhead of all wisdom. If each child has to perform experiment then he/she should have access to kit material. This in turn meant that such material should be procured and supplied to all the schools.

If the teachers' responses were to be crucial to the development of the curriculum, it required that they have forums for expressing their

views, sharing each others experiences—without being bamboozled by their superiors—forums where they are listened to and respected.

The political outcome of this can be seen in the simple fact that HSTP teachers could on their own sustain an argument with a hostile union minister in a recent meeting.

The second principle also had some very simple administrative implications—teachers will have to travel a lot more, meet each other and the resource persons a lot more. Administrative orders to this effect have to be issued and TA-DA paid. Despite occasional support of the higher reaches of the bureaucracy none of these requirements could be met without sustained pressure of the voluntary groups involved. They had to pressurise matters at every step and level of authority, from the school headmaster to the ministry itself.

In the course of this work administrative structures and processes necessary for innovation have been created. Yet these are too weak to face the inertia of the rest of the bureaucracy without the help and intervention of the voluntary groups. It is not merely administrative matters that require voluntary intervention. Effective running of the programmes with minimum efficiency requires close monitoring and interaction with teachers by motivated personnel.

After nearly two decades of experience it is clear that the government structure cannot run an effective innovative programme. The government lacks the will and capability required and at best of times can merely support voluntary effort in this direction.

If the government machinery cannot on its own run an innovative programme, then what is the prospect for the duplicability of such programmes?

Either the voluntary groups create a parallel administration all over the state and thereby cease to be voluntary or allow the programme to be implemented by the government and render the programme meaningless.

Even if the HSTP may not be duplicable on a large scale it has had a far reaching impact. It has helped to change the educational climate where a hundred theories can't convince one practical and concrete example makes a dent. More important, it can be used to demonstrate that effective education is not possible without a minimum degree of democratisation thus pointing out concretely the structural weaknesses of our society. If, at all, the efforts that have gone into this programme over almost 18 years have any wider meaning it consists in demonstrating the crying need for a structural change.

This takes us to the question of voluntary agencies and the role assigned to them by the NEP. 'Considering the need for ensuring relationship of genuine partnership between the government and voluntary agencies, government will take positive steps to promote their wide involvement' (*Programme of Action*, p 204).

In recent years the government has been providing funds and creating space for work for voluntary groups, particularly in the sphere of

nonformal education and curriculum development. Voluntary groups are now being allowed entry into areas that have been the preserve of the government

We need not go here into the complex motives that have led the government into this policy. Rather let us see the possibilities opened by this policy and its limitations

The experience of HSTP and other groups working in education indicates that in order to run any programme effectively they have to initiate some minimum process of democratisation—however limited in scope. It is this prospect of bringing a few droplets of democratisation to this parched society that really lures many of the liberal-radical intelligentsia to voluntary groups. When the government provides the funds and room for this it also promises to be both safe and effective.

Much has been achieved by such voluntary work—particularly among the middle classes. There is a promise of introducing some liberal democratic and left wing culture into the life of the middle classes, thereby, weaning them away from right wing fascist ideologies.

Such promises notwithstanding we need to understand that such voluntary work faces definite qualitative and quantitative limitations. On the one hand their ability to reach the poorest strata of the society is inversely proportional to their ability to spread geographically or to make wider impact. In fact one can doubt the very possibility of reaching the strata beneath the middle peasantry. As we had argued above any programme that seeks to reach out to the proletarian strata has to embroil itself in deeper political struggles. Governmental funding and governmental room can effectively curtail such tendencies of voluntary groups.

Even as far as the middle classes are concerned voluntary efforts reach their limits rather fast. A major limitation is geographical. We can't think of a voluntary group that can run a programme across a vast area

The limitation is also provided by rest of the structure in even a small area. The HSTP for example faces a serious challenge from the entire system of tuition and mass copying, and it has no power to fight these forces on a large scale. It is virtually like tending a new mode of production in the womb of the old—only with little prospect of ever delivering

Whatever the voluntary agencies may achieve can only be a miniscule fraction of what is actually required by the entire society. Voluntary agencies cannot substitute for a genuine all around process of democratisation and perhaps they cannot even generate such processes. Perhaps the government's keenness to harness voluntary agencies springs from its desire to keep the process of democratisation in strict limits

Our underlying argument in the preceding pages has been that, a basic social process of democratisation is essential to bring about any

rapid or effective change in the educational situation. There is a need to fight the feudal-casteist stranglehold, to fight the dead weight of bureaucracy and to integrate the fight for education with the fight for social emancipation. Even to arrest the decay that has set in the education system—to motivate the teacher to teach, to fight corruption and to initiate some academic innovation, democratisation is essential.

It is also clear that such democratisation cannot be brought about by this government or by the blooming of a hundred voluntary groups

The solution really lies in building up mass struggle. Until the mass of the people get activated in struggles and until the masses dismantle the old and begin to build anew—we can only talk of educational change and experiment in pockets—we can not really change.

Note In writing this paper we had extensive discussions with a number of friends, we would like to acknowledge in particular our indebtedness to Dr Sushil Joshi and Ms Sadhna Saxena

K. RAMAKRISHNAN*

Entrance Examinations: Iniquitous Instrument

ENTRANCE TESTS PERPETUATE EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

In our country an objective type entrance examination has now become the major, if not the sole, screening instrument for selection to professional education as well as for employment. Ironically, in the United States of America from where we borrowed this practice, more and more prestigious institutions are abandoning the use of such tests and many judicial decisions have struck down the use of such tests by employers.¹ The reasoning goes something like this. The validity of the tests for selecting the appropriate candidates has not been established; however the disadvantaged groups (such as the blacks and ethnic minorities in the US scene) are evidently affected adversely. Thus there is room to suspect that the tests are unfairly discriminatory. It is in this context we feel that the assumptions regarding the 'Objectivity' of these types of examinations require a more detailed discussion, particularly in our context where applicants for education and jobs come from widely varying backgrounds.

We must remember that the so called objective type examination is objective with respect to *ONLY* the evaluation of the performances in the examination and *NOT* with respect to the design of the examination itself. We must also recognize that such an examination acts as an eliminating mechanism rather than a selection instrument. After all no one will claim that *ALL* those who are not admitted to, say, IITs, are not fit for the programme. It is this aspect of these examinations which is crucial and has far reaching implications to the perpetuation of inequalities.² First we show that these examinations can not claim that they select only the most appropriate candidates. We argue that the error of selecting the inappropriate candidates can not be even estimated, let alone eliminated. Hence, we suggest, that our aim should only be to *reduce the other kind of error viz that of rejecting acceptable candidates*. Only then, we can be sure that the screening mechanism is not biased through considerations other than that of appropriateness for the programme in favour of a small group. Let us now look at some of the adverse consequences of the biases introduced through aspects such as the following

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The Form of the Examination

Educationists concur that the assessment of the same individual when tested by different tests can vary.³ An examination which tests the ability to mechanically absorb information and reproduce the same at the time of the examination can be advantageous to some while a test which assesses the ability of the testee to comprehend a problem and identify an approach to solve it, based on the understanding of concepts, may favour others. The short duration multiple choice tests may assess yet another skill. So far no clear evidence seems to exist to show that a particular type of test is valid for the purpose of rejecting an applicant as unacceptable for a programme of study or for a job. Thus we have introduced an element of subjectivity through a particular choice of the form of the examination which choice is the result of historical reasons and personal preferences of the test administrators.

Conditions of Examination

We are all aware that in real life, problem solving does not have to take place without the benefit of consulting appropriate reference material or under highly artificial time constraint of 2 or 3 hours for solving several problems. The ability to perform better than others under such conditions can not necessarily be equated to potential better performance on the shop floor or in the R&D laboratory or across the negotiating table. But by insisting on time limits and denying access to reference material we have the second element of subjectivity creeping in the design of the examinations.

The Language and Style Used in Wording Questions

Much has been written about the issue of medium of instruction as well as about the deteriorating quality of teaching English in our schools and colleges.⁴ What are the implications to the issue under discussion? A candidate who may be competent in a particular discipline such as science or mathematics may still find himself at a disadvantage if he has to take more time to comprehend the questions in an entrance examination set in a language or idiom familiar to the examiner but alien to the candidate. Given such biases, which are not necessarily related to the final attributes needed on the job, entrance tests can hardly be characterized as objective. In academic parlance such tests as screening instruments may be reliable but not necessarily valid. What does this mean?

VALIDITY OF ENTRANCE TESTS CHALLENGED

A screening instrument may be called reliable because of its ability to repeatedly identify the individuals with more or less similar competencies or skills. However, the same instrument may not necessarily be valid if these competencies or skills are not the only ones which are crucial for the performance in the programme or for the career for which selection is made.⁵ Worse still is the situation when

the selection is based on some ordinal ranking according to the numerical scores in the examination. The differences in scores have no operational significance i.e. a person, whose score in such an examination is twice the score of another person, is not twice as competent as the latter. Moreover when the difference in scores of consecutively ranked candidates is of the order of a fraction of the total (or maximum possible) score—as is usually the case when thousands of candidates take the test—it is unrealistic to decide that the higher ranked candidate is superior. These concepts are best understood with the help of an illustration. Hence let us take the JEE for the selection to the IITs.

The candidates taking the JEE are examined in mathematics, physics, chemistry. The candidates are ranked from the highest scorer downwards with respect to the aggregate score. Admission is offered from the top ranker downwards till seats are filled.

We do not know much about the way in which these tests have been validated. For example, has the test been administered to groups of individuals who are now performing the functions that are most likely to be expected of the graduating students? Has it at least been administered to groups of students in similar technology/engineering education programmes of other institutions whose graduates have been in the profession for a long time? Have such students indicated with reasonable level of confidence that there is some correlation between the scores and their job performance or career progress? While I cannot establish that such validation has not been carried out, I suspect that the answer is in the negative.

If we accept the possibility that appropriate validation studies may not have been carried out to establish that the JEE is both reliable and valid as an instrument to identify all those who are appropriate for the educational programme or for the career thereafter, then it follows that we must seriously consider the following proposition. JEE can also lead to the denial of opportunity to many deserving candidates. But this is what most of those who defend JEE are not willing to concede. Many defend the JEE with arguments on either of the following lines.

- 1) Those who believe strongly in meritocracy insist that even among all those who are appropriate or acceptable for the course of study (and the career that the study leads to) some are more appropriate than others. Hence, they argue, a mechanism such as the JEE, which enables ranking the candidates, is the most effective.⁶
- 2) Those who would like to consider themselves as pragmatists, suggest that the screening candidates are left out because the number of available opportunities is far less than the number competing—a problem that can be solved only by increasing the number of opportunities. These pragmatists would argue that

under such circumstances the practical solution is to employ a criterion which at least gives the appearance that the meritorious are rewarded. And JEE scores is such a criterion according to them.

ENTRANCE TEST SCORE CANNOT BE THE SOLE CRITERION

Let us evaluate the arguments of those who believe that the single criterion, viz., the candidate's rank in JEE is in fact a reflection of the degree of appropriateness for the programme of study or for the career. Implicit in the arguments of this group, is the assumption that excellence in a particular form of examination in mathematics, physics and chemistry, is a necessary and sufficient condition for satisfactory performance in a programme of technological education and in the subsequent career utilising that expertise. But is this assumption valid? It is not, if we consider the arguments below.

Graduates of the programme such as that offered in the IITs are expected to perform one of a variety of roles: technical managers/administrators, creative innovators for applying available technologies, teachers for technical education, and researchers in the field of technology, to illustrate a few. Under the circumstances, how can we accept the excellence in mathematics and physical sciences as the sole criterion for selection to the programme? Such excellence at best can indicate the potential for theoretical R & D work. The number of opportunities available in our society, for such positions, I feel, will be much smaller than the number required as technocrats, technical teachers and designers. Thus, selecting candidates based on their excellence in mathematics and physical sciences does not seem right. This is probably why a large proportion of IIT graduates migrate to the USA for further studies or a career involving R&D opportunity.⁷

Moreover, as already pointed out, even such excellence is not correctly assessed in view of the bias introduced through the form of the examination. Thus, the assumptions that the ranks according to the scores in JEE reflect the degree of appropriateness either to the programme of study or to the subsequent career is ill-founded. Accordingly using these ranks alone as the basis for selection is in a sense arbitrary. It may be noted that even in the United States of America, from where the concept of JEE has been borrowed, a candidate's score in tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test or Graduate Record Examination are used only as one of several inputs but not as the sole input by the selectors. In fact, many renowned US universities are, of late, abandoning the use of these tests, because of the apprehension that they discriminate against specific ethnic groups—a point we made at the beginning of this article.

We already pointed out that a candidate's performance in an examination of the JEE type depends not only on the candidate's basic knowledge of the subjects and the analytical ability, but also on the skill in performing a particular type of examination. This skill is

neither generally developed in the prevailing system of education, nor can be considered crucial for the performance on the job as a technologist. But this skill can be acquired in the short run by being specially coached. In a society like ours, the candidates from more affluent sections can afford to spend money and be coached for the JEEs through any of several private coaching institutions which charge exorbitant fees.⁸ Thus they have an unfair advantage over an otherwise equally competent individual who has never been exposed to such form of testing. This bias in favour of a small minority, may have another adverse consequence too as discussed below.

The affluent ones, who succeed in JEEs on account of the special coaching, may not be the most appropriate candidates to receive the expensive technological education at society's cost. In this context we use the concept of appropriateness not only with reference to the ability to satisfactorily complete the programme of study, but also with respect to the propensity to continue to serve the profession and the country. In the absence of a test component which helps to identify those with aptitude for the engineering profession and for service to the society, it is no wonder, we find that many of the graduating IIT students pursue further studies in other disciplines such as management or migrate to other countries. Careful studies of correlations between the JEE scores and factors such as economic background; incidence of migration out of technology, and incidence of migration out of the country, may provide very interesting insights. However I do not want to push this point far, precisely for the same reason for which I discount the assumed correlation between JEE scores and degree of acceptability to the programme, empirical studies are needed to establish these hypotheses.

It will suffice for now to emphasise the point that using the performance in JEE as the sole criterion for admission to the programme is hardly scientific. It should be noted that the process does not become flawless when entrance examination scores are used in conjunction with past academic scores and a combined score is evolved. In other words, marginal variations of scores in academic examinations or the entrance examinations are not necessarily indicative of the differences in appropriateness of those who are getting such different scores, for the professional education.

USE OF ENTRANCE TESTS TO ELIMINATE THE MISFITS

Let us now turn our attention to the point of view of the pragmatists that despite the shortcomings of the JEE we should live with it. Their argument runs thus: the differences among applicants, (in terms of the content, the quality as well as the methods of assessment of the programmes of study, already undergone by them) are too significant to be ignored. Hence the past academic performance alone can not be considered as a basis for selection. Well, it is a valid argument and the unfortunate deterioration of academic standards in education, as a

result of political interference, and deteriorating professional values of educators do make it difficult to accept at face value the credentials given by many educational systems. But our attempt to reduce the adverse impact of the above phenomenon should not lead us to the adoption of a process whose validity is questionable and whose 'merit'—if it is a merit at all—is its ability to select a more or less homogeneous group of individuals from a small section of the society.

The pragmatism of accepting a situation that many deserving candidates are going to be left out anyway (on account of lack of enough seats) cannot be allowed to work in favour of a small group who can afford to get themselves a particular type of education and further special coaching, all of which give them an advantage in a particular type of JEE. Other alternatives must be explored to ensure that *all those* who can be considered capable of satisfactorily completing the programme of study are given an *equal* chance of getting selected. Hence let us now explore whether other approaches are possible to enable a fairer selection process being adopted. In exploring alternatives for such a selection process we should keep in mind the following considerations which arise out of our discussions so far.

- (1) Given the present state of the art in predicting academic performance, job performance and other socially desirable performance as a professional, *no* selection process can assess the candidates in such a way that they can be graded from the most to the least appropriate.
- (2) Consequently the screening process must be designed to be efficient only from the point of view of eliminating a) those who will definitely be misfits for the profession and/or, b) who cannot satisfactorily complete the programme of study under the normal circumstances.
- (3) Since the screening process as above may lead to a situation in which the number of candidates who are considered 'acceptable' will be far in excess of the number of seats available, an allocation mechanism will have to be employed to distribute the seats among the acceptable applicants.
- (4) It is reasonable to assume that the allocation mechanism must, a) be simple to comprehend and apply, and b) ensure that all acceptable candidates have an equal chance of being allotted a seat.

Let us see how these considerations can be met and a screening and allotting procedure be devised. Let us again consider the JEE itself as an example. The JEE scores of students who have already gone through the programme of study must be carefully analysed. The JEE must be administered to practicing professionals and students in advanced stages of similar programme. Based on the pattern of the scores obtained by these groups of people, a minimum cut-off score can be identified. Only those candidates who score below this minimum in

every appearance of theirs at the JEE should be considered as *not* acceptable

It must be made clear at this point that I consider it desirable to conduct JEEs at least twice a year and allow (in fact encourage) students planning to apply for the programme to appear for the JEE even while they are in the 11th standard, so that they would have appeared for the JEE at least twice by the time their candidacy is considered for admission. This way unusual circumstances during a single appearance having been responsible for scoring less than the minimum required, may be avoided.

Another point of clarification is with respect to the applicability of these cut-off scores for students from special groups. Notice that we have suggested the cut-off score to be maintained at a level which will correspond to the minimum competencies required to go through the programme under normal circumstances. It may be possible that the society is willing to defray the additional cost to give special attention to a small proportion of students from particular groups in order to redress the imbalances in educational equality. Hence for these special groups a lower cut-off may be employed which will be considered appropriate taking into account the extra attention that can be bestowed on these groups. However, we would argue that the proportion of such students should be restricted to, say, less than 20 per cent of the total available seats. In the same way recognition of exceptional talent can be possible by allotting, say, 10 per cent of the seats to those who are in the top 10 per cent in terms of both their past academic performance and their JEE score.

LOTTERY AMONG ACCEPTABLE CANDIDATES

The remaining seats (in our scheme, about 70 per cent of the total) must be allotted among all those found acceptable—i.e. scoring above the cut-off level—on the basis of a lottery, which is the only mechanism which ensures equal chance for all acceptable candidates. I am aware that the idea sounds outlandish given the reverence we have for what we call 'merit'. But if one calmly considers the proposition, and the current context, one cannot escape the conclusion that it is not such an outlandish idea after all.

We have seen that institutions such as IITs and IIMs either ignore or heavily discount the past academic performance for the purpose of final selection. They use a pass (or certain minimum percentage of marks) in the qualifying examination as a cut-off device to permit or reject the applicant's participation in the JEE. If all the past history of academic performance can thus be discounted, what is outlandish in suggesting that JEE scores also be used only in a similar manner viz to be a threshold for acceptability or otherwise?

The argument that JEE, unlike past academic performance, is based on an examination conducted and evaluated uniformly for all applicants and hence is a better instrument, has already been

challenged in this note and I hope it is unnecessary to repeat our arguments. Moreover why should we find it an outlandish suggestion that the limited number of educational opportunities, (which are in any case currently being bought and sold as commodities) be distributed on the basis of chance? After all we do accept lotteries for the allotment of housing, cars and scooters! If we can accept that the JEE and its cut-off score can be so designed that the chances of incompetent candidates being admitted are negligible, then we have several advantages in accepting a lottery system than the present ranking system

The major advantage will be that we can resolve the controversy over the reservation of seats almost completely. In order to comprehend this proposition we must understand how the demand for reservation of seats arose in the first place. When past academic performance was the major criterion for selection for a professional education, it was considered as an unfair advantage to certain castes. It seems to have been argued that the scheduled castes and the backward castes suffered on account of the fact that the educational tradition among them was of a more recent origin than among the 'forward' castes whose members were cornering most of the educational opportunities. Hence it was demanded that opportunities be reserved for the 'backward' castes. For the purpose of this discussion, it is not necessary to go into the details of this line of argument. What is important for us, is to understand that the problem arose largely because the past academic performance was considered as the only, or the major, criterion for the purpose of selection to the professional education.

However, in a selection process which assures that all acceptable candidates would have equal chance of getting selected, no group will be discriminated against. Hence there will not be any need for reservation, in principle. However, reservation for the special groups, who may be accepted without having to participate in the lottery may be possible as already discussed. The specific understanding is that the state is willing to spend more resources on those students, in order to help them through the programme. Thus the whole controversy regarding proper criteria for backwardness etc., will become irrelevant if selection among all those who are acceptable is based on chance.

Secondly, with such an approach, we may be able to persuade those systems which are not currently using JEE as a screening device to accept the same, because the threat of some groups cornering seats is reduced. JEEs for different types of educational streams can be conducted by an independent body at the national level more than once a year and the scores obtained by the candidates can be used by the institutions concerned. Such a uniform policy will go a long way to equalize educational quality all over the country.

Finally, those who get selected will have no illusions about their chosen status⁹ and those who did not get a seat will have no inferiority complex since everyone is aware of the role of lady-luck in the selection

where the selection to a programme of study or for a career is based on a process whose validity has not been conclusively established, the practice of accepting candidates solely based on the ranks in the selection process must be abandoned. Instead, as described here, the final selection must be on the basis of a lottery among all those considered acceptable. Such a practice while opening the possibilities to more number of deserving candidates, will also have a sobering effect on those who are finally selected since they will be aware of the role of chance in their selection.

However, efforts must continue to refine the screening procedures such that the cut-off score can be gradually raised to ensure that the number of candidates found acceptable (and thus becomes eligible to participate in the lottery), is not much larger than the number required to fill up the seats.

One of the ways in which the number of the acceptable candidates can be reduced is to use multiple criteria in each of which the candidate should cross a threshold level to become eligible for the lottery. While such a method is not strictly in accordance with our principle of rejecting only those who are definitely inappropriate for the course, the probability of error against those who are appropriate may be greatly reduced. The development of a variety of tests, validation of the same, and evaluation of their performance on a continuous basis, is a process we should accept as a necessary component of research in the field of higher education.¹⁰ It is a very slow process and before enough confidence can be gained in the discriminatory power of the tests, it is better to accept the role of chance too, rather than accept the role of inherent biases and misguided objectivity.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Donald Crowley, 'Selection Tests and Equal Opportunity' in *Administration and Society*, Vol 17, No 3, Nov 1985, pp 361-384
- 2 See for example Baldev R Sharma, 'What marks a manager ment, motivation or money' *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 27, 1972, pp M51-M66. This article reports the findings of a study based on admission (to IIM, Ahmedabad) data for five years. The findings suggest, among other things, that over the year 1967-71, the number of lowest income group (less than Rs 3000/= p a) applicants have reduced while that of the highest income (over Rs 15000 p a) has increased. Written tests have aggravated the problems for poor students.
- 3 See, for instance, Green B, 'A Primer of Testing', *American Psychologist*, Vol 36, 1981, pp 1001-1011.
- 4 See, for instance, an almost continuing debate on the issue in the 'Letters to the Editor' columns of English newspapers such as *The Hindu* and the *Indian Express*, recently and in the past.
- 5 For example See E.J. McGrath, *The Liberal Arts College and the Emergent Caste Systems*, Teachers College Press, New York, 1966, p 22. 'Selective Admission on limited measures of ability to pass admission tests may close the door of opportunity to those who have the capacity to innovate, to recognize interrelations, or who have dedication to human welfare that will result in singular contributions to the well-being of mankind'.
- 6 An example of the dependence on the infallibility of those scores is the study by Shantamani V S, 'Selection of Students', *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*,

Vol 15, 1979, pp 93-101 In this paper the correlations between selection test scores and the first year scores are cited as evidence of appropriateness of the tests The 'r' values range from a low of 0.23 (general knowledge score vs 1 year score) to a high of 0.43 (test score in maths component vs 1 year score) The fact that during the 1 year very few engineering courses are taught, as well as the observation that the correlation coefficients are less than 0.5 do not seem to support the author's premise about the validity of the tests

- 7 According to one study, nearly a third of the alumni of IIT, Bombay, who graduated between 1973 and 1977 have settled abroad In more than 70 per cent of the cases the purpose of the initial visit was for undergoing further studies See S P Sukhatme and I Mahadevan, 'Brain Drain and the IIT Graduate', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 18, 1988, pp 1287-88
- 8 The tremendous popularity of the coaching centres is seen in the multi-crore business transactions of these centres M Shatrugna, 'Entrance System for Elimination' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Sept 30, 1989, p 2191
- 9 See T Vengateswara Roa and P Vijayasree, 'Psychological Maturity and Motivational Profiles of Management Students', *Technical Report*, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, June 1976, p 22 'The students of those management institutions group and the fact that they are selected by IIMs is an indicator of their high ability' The observation can equally apply to those who get selected for IITs The authors go on to point out that the effects of such a self-concept 'are revealed through their high aggression, dominance, low respect for authority, high ego-achievement, high exhibitionism, high fantasized achievement, low interest in humanities and social sciences, high narcissism and low objectivity'
- 10 Vengateswara Roa & Vijayashree, (*op cit*) also suggest that 'it may be advisable to select students who are likely to indicate different profiles In this connection it is also to be noted that the Madras High Court suggested that a more comprehensive question paper for the entrance test be evolved 'so that the candidates who had studied various disciplines of vocational courses would be able to prove their proficiency in general knowledge and aptitude and one of the related subjects (mathematics, physics and chemistry)' News item in *The Hindu* Nov 16, 1985, p 5

ANITA RAMPAL *

Distant Learning and Distancing the Learner

The National Policy on Education-1986 (NPE) eulogised the role of technology in communication and in the same breath equated communication with education 'Modern communication technologies have the potential to bypass several stages and sequences in the process of development encountered in earlier decades. Both the constraints of time and distance at once become manageable. In order to avoid structural dualism, modern educational technology must reach out to the most distant areas and the most deprived sections of beneficiaries simultaneously with the areas of comparative affluence and ready availability'.¹ The Programme of Action (POA) which soon followed, further interpreted the above lines of the NPE to state that 'this approach would intrinsically favour the use of broadcast methods, with their inherent advantages of greater reach, convenience of management and cost-effectiveness, over the non-broadcast methods largely oriented to individual learning'.² These policy statements positively disturb, invariably compelling one to ask what, after all, is the official notion of 'education', or, for that matter, of 'learning'?

One of the most fundamental problems of our present educational system is that knowledge has been increasingly redefined to mean information and, subsequently, learning is now accepted synonymous to 'receiving information'. Such reification of knowledge ensures that it can now be treated as an acquired possession, and that access to such possession can be suitably monitored or, in current parlance, be conveniently managed. Moreover, this redefinition compels the learner to accept a passive, vulnerable and receptive role. For, once education has been effectively renormalised in this fashion, control can be exercised through various means: information can be centralised or centrally collated and suitably disseminated, its relevance selectively decided, its pacing carefully tuned to maintain requisite pressure, and its evaluation judiciously tailored to suit satisfactory statistics.

A majority of our young population today constitutes the cadre of 'distant learners', distanced as they are from those who decide what they must pretend to learn. The nature of the content of their education is so irrelevant, the language of educational discourse so alienating,

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and the pedagogical experience often so oppressive and humiliating that sooner or later, most of them drop out of the system. Latest editions of textbooks being revised in the name of NPE continue to baffle teachers more than ever before. Pedagogy, even at the school level, has effectively been forced into a broadcast mode: incomprehensible messages shouted out at large audiences. Indeed even examinations, especially those for the 'distant learners' belonging to the hinterland, have already been suitably adjusted to conform with the 'favoured' broadcast mode—dictation of answers is the casually (almost philanthropically) accepted norm, being increasingly adopted by the hinterland educators as a conscious coping strategy. The farce (pun unintended) lies entirely exposed. the very spirit of education has been sacrificed at the altars of learning

Ironically, the 'non-broadcast methods largely oriented to individual learning' have never been given a chance. For, if education were truly congruent with the constructivist theories of learning—which hold that each individual learns by actively making sense of the world around her (or him), by internally restructuring external knowledge, and seeks to understand only when personally motivated by an urge to inquire—then learning itself could acquire political dimensions. When millions and millions of 'distant learners' are no longer benumbed or befooled by the incomprehensibility of their education, but instead are actively making sense of the world around them, then they could begin to question the consequences of their hinterland existence and might actively compete with the present privileged few for the plums at the peak of the pyramid. Indeed the pyramid could lose its stability, or even its shape, if actual learning were ever to happen. It is obviously safer to distance the learners than have them at uncomfortably close quarters.

Distance education is a concept more appropriate for countries like Canada or Australia where, in certain regions, the population is so sparse and the distances to established centres so large that for people who wish to pursue a part-time course of study there is no other alternative. Moreover, even in countries where basic technology is easily accessible and television sets exist in most homes, the broadcast mode is meant to supplement excellently prepared written material and is, in addition, often made more interactive by immediately being followed by telephonic discussions between the tutor and groups of students. In any case those involved in the business of education fully acknowledge the limitations of such one-way non-participatory media which, especially on the broadcast mode, cannot even allow a student to refer back to material once presented. Indeed, educational broadcasting, even in the supplementary role, it is meant to assume, is taken to be a serious matter, to inform and yet intrigue, incite curiosity and also pre-empt queries is undoubtedly a creative challenge.

Unfortunately, educational broadcasting in our country has had a dismal history. School radio broadcasts have been on for more than

forty years and the quality leaves much to be desired, to say the least. Education through television, with far greater investments, has limped along for more than a decade and a half. The curriculum-based programmes meant to supplement school teaching are extremely poor productions and often replicate a boring classroom lecture. In fact it is often shocking to find that the film medium could be used so unimaginatively—not even simple outdoor visuals are included that may be essential to the topic under consideration and may, in addition, provide a vicarious release from the confines of a gloomy classroom. Yet, perhaps, Doordarshan budgets don't allow for such 'frills'. The highly competitive and overtly commercial world of media production has no place for education, for, a commodity that cannot boast of high consumerist sponsorship is normally not worthy of prime viewing. Educational programmes constitute a special genre, requiring highly creative inputs both from the fields of education and media communication. Conventional 'experts' in the former have not succeeded in rendering the potentially interactive non-broadcast modes even remotely inspiring for learners, technology placed in their hands cannot offer much more than a dehumanised pedagogue. On the other hand, talent in media production finds no incentive, financial or otherwise, to gravitate towards education. It is thus the ill-fated marriage of obscurantism with mediocrity that has procreated what today goes by the name of educational software in India. Moreover, what is surprising is the lack of concern for high quality software: educational policies do not seem to invest any effort in planning how meaningful compatibility could possibly be forged between good education and good media production.

What clearly seems to be the *raison d'être* for Educational Technology is not so much education as technology: televisions, tape recorders, VCRs, computers and what have you—all such goodies have been promised to the rural hinterland and vast resources allocated for the attendant infrastructure hardware. All in the name of education. Unmindful of what happened with the minor technology doles in the past, Everything appears to have been worked out for this bonanza except for some small problems. As confessed by the POA, 'one of the major hurdles in the way of introducing modern technology in the rural hinterland is the availability of assured electric supply. Providing a source of assured electricity is a pre-requisite for using technological options in the service of education and needs to be addressed on priority'.³ Another 'minor hitch', pointed out by one top official consultant responsible for pushing computers into schools, is the 'high dust level', but that too could certainly be overcome. So if education can bring such spin-offs as complete rural electrification (and low dust levels?) the masses may not consider it such a bad deal after all. Indeed TV was first introduced in India primarily for 'educational purposes'—and we have seen how it has continued to 'educate' us over the past twenty years. Perhaps 'education' is officially construed to

mean something quite different from what some of us might expect. In that case it might be more judicious to keep it at some distance.

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BOOK REVIEW

Issues in Women's Education

Karuna Chanana (Ed), *Socialisation, Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity* (Nehru Memorial Library), Orient Longmans, 1988, pp 320

As the title suggests this volume of essays attempts to go beyond the descriptive analysis to be found in most studies dealing with women's education based on macro data. The important concern of the sociologist here is however to identify the role of socialisation in female access to enrolment and dropping out of the formal educational system, despite the positive approach to women's education in the post-independence period. The gap between boys and girls and men and women continues to exist. Thus socialisation is thematically introduced as an interactive concept to attempt an explanation of the miserable scenario of women in education. As a first step the concept of education is broadened and extended to include socialisation which emphasizes the gender connotations, in seeking the linkages between data, objective factors and subjective self-assessment. The framework that emerges is predominantly feminist, often radical.

Socialisation is conceptually grasped as 'the process of construction of a woman's reality in the home' is pivotal in determining self-perception and value internalisation to determine attitudes to both education and work. Socialisation therefore plays an important role in cognising the 'significant others' to emerge with the dichotomous male and female roles. Such a social consciousness consistently and continuously begins to de-limit choices for girls and women in education and work. Thus socialisation may be seen as a world view which divides 'us' and the significant others' into mutually exclusive spheres, the realm of men and the realm of women. The studies in this volume 'deconstruct' the reality of women, in the family and in society and pose questions relating to self-perception, identity and role, social perceptions and the role of education as a catalyst in undermining and even changing the false consciousness that is the result of tradition and modernity being at loggerheads as far as the status of women in our society is concerned. In posing the question what does education do to women and for women, we have to study closely the value orientation of society which can emerge through prevalent attitudes to women's education and work.

In the sociology of education, the structural-functionalist school (Durkheim, Craft, Simpson, Rosenholtz, Rosenbaum and Shipton) looked at society as a smooth running system and were concerned mainly with ability and performance. Radical sociologists (Young, Bernstein) raised methodological questions, identifying the class view point in looking at the educational system, but not going so far as to raise the question of ideology and the state, as Freire, Althusser and Bowels and Gintis did. Although the Editor sees the distinction between radicals and Marxists as 'largely heuristic', since the education as a tool in the hands of the ruling elite and the role of the 'hidden curriculum' in reproducing class or gender relations, she neither investigates the consequences nor the impact of such heuristic distinctions in confronting the dominant ideology which plays an important role in the field of women, education and work. As she quotes 'when educational inequalities were first examined the effects of being a male or a female were not considered relevant to educational performance' (Chapman, 86) and concludes that where socialisation intervenes in a conclusive manner, education cannot play the role of an equalizer. This is because the feminist framework limits the concept of socialisation to the women-as-a-class approach, which is neither scientific nor analytically useful. The conclusive evidence suggests to her that the feminist argument of identifying existing educational inequalities through gender discrimination explains why there is gender asymmetry, assuming that this was always so and perhaps does not investigate why it continues to be so, even with the policy direction for a self-conscious approach towards women's education.

Let us now see how the feminist argument has evolved. Biological differences are viewed as 'natural' and the social and cultural values that emerge from such physical distinctions are 'naturally given'. Socialisation indicates the process of value internalisation within the family and kinship groups and its reinforcement by religious ideology, myth and ritual. This is reflected in separate girl's and boy's schools, syllabi and extra curricular activities, views and comments of teachers and parents on gender roles and identity. Thus gender codes develop to determine seating arrangements, games, choice of subject, even competition. Such codes reinforce gender stereo-typing, the consequence of which is to combine the educational and social function for girls (what girls ought to do) whereas in the case of boys the role of education is quite separate from their social role. If education merely reinforces the role of a woman as housewife or mother what role does it perform in conditioning the image of men as breadwinners and protectors?

Ms Chanana then links up the gains of the women's movement in the West with a systematic study of gender and education. Feminists and likeminded sociologists identified the 'structural subordination of women in all societies', resulting in differences in role expectation for men and women. They exposed the linkages between role expectations,

educational ability and segregation as well as a sexual division of labour, so that women as an oppressed class could identify with gender asymmetry all over the world, for the following reasons: women accept inferior status because patriarchy lowers their self-esteem; men control knowledge through curriculum design; boys get more attention than girls in a mixed classroom, leadership roles are assigned to boys, teachers' attitudes reflect gender stereo-typing. They have not been able to research how girls internalise these messages about their inferior or given status. Gender biases in curriculum are however easier to establish, particularly after the growth in women's studies. Thus feminists conclude that men and women are hierarchical categories within the patriarchal system rather than representatives of their social classes. Further, the concept of sex role socialisation is a concept which not only restricts a woman's choice, but even prevents changes. In India reform oriented feminists feel that once we understand the concept of socialisation, modifications within the existing system can bring changes in the education and status of women, but this functional approach no longer convinces anyone since we have seen the drawbacks of this line of thinking in the failure of educational policy and planning to bridge the gap. Such an approach is rightly questioned and rejected by most authors in this volume. However, the alternative is neither a very clear vision nor a unified approach. Socialisation, education and women are looked at in a flexible manner. P. N. Mukherji is of the opinion that male and female roles are not necessarily the cause of sexual inequality. He proposes three counter concepts: discrimination, exploitation and oppression. He indicates that a progressive reduction in these three would increase equality since the three concepts lead to asymmetrical relations between groups in socio-political and economic fields. He advocates a study of the inter-linkages to understand sexual inequality.

Karlekar, Basu and Chanana study the passage of women's education in British India in Bengal, Bombay and in the country as a whole, highlighting the cultural lag, despite rapid social changes, that demanded that education should not blur male-female role distinctions. The use of life-histories and biographies to outline the debate on women's education is an interesting and imaginative approach to data collection.

Leela Dube looks at woman as a product of patrilineal, parochial Hindu society, in the context of family and kinship and contrasts it with the situation in matrilineal society. Along with Das, she points to the subordination of women through control of their sexuality and Hartman extends this to subordination through control of economic resources. Bhatti looks at double standards in social morality: although her remarks relate to the Muslim community, they can be extended to all communities in India. Vibha Parthasarthy, deals with the role of the educational institution in neutralising stereo-types by stressing individuality and personhood for alternative role models.

One doubts her contention however that prejudices can be fought from 'above' without linking up the social and economic function of education

Mrinal Pande looks at woman characters in theatre, identifying Sanskrit drama with patriarchal-feudal values and contemporary theatre with a mix of Hindu, Muslim and British values. Her contention that women playwrights are motivated to rethink the question of the status of women is the direct result of what one might call the counter culture. She also takes up the question of social morality for women professionals in the theatre

M. Mukherji uses the text to examine self-perception through the writings of women in 19th century Bengal and these explorations show up by omission that which is suppressed in comment

C.S. Lakshmi looks at Tamil literature for an image of women, reflecting the struggle between traditional femininity and modernization. Prabha Krishnan looks at science fiction, a male preserve, to show that there is conformity in sex-role models in this genre as well. Pushpa Sundar writes about an emerging area, the education and socialisation of women entrepreneurs, by identifying impediments of family, society and government to the entry of women in industry. The conclusions that emerge are that formal education cannot effectively change the status of women without recognising the part played by socialisation in determining individual and social attitudes. It has even failed to neutralise the subtle and not so subtle pressure of socialisation in keeping women out. In addition mass media, theatre and literature reinforce role differentiation. Myths and rituals are a part of the process of socialisation which instil fear and inhibitions in the minds of women, thereby limiting the quality of liberation.

Therefore the slogan of universalisation of education will not solve the problem without recognising the special approach that socialisation correctly emphasizes. The growing demand for dowry is a case in point where the educational system has fostered the distinction between girls and boys. Education cannot generate its own dynamics and socialisation indicates the direction in which structural transformation has to take place to deal with women and development, for which education has an important role to play. This is perhaps the first step, to link the question of gender relationships to developmental issues, so that the educational revolution should emerge from the social context. Whether the protagonists are seeking to revolutionise the context or not and therefore how far their expectations are reflected in the new educational policy is not taken into account.

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BOOK REVIEW

Once Again for a Causal Quantum Theory

BJ Hilley and F D Peat (Eds), *Quantum Implications*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and New York, 1987, pp 455.

The history of the development of quantum mechanics provides an excellent example of how far ideology plays a role in the choice of physical theory. While two different approaches were offered in the Solvay Congress of 1927 for explaining quantum phenomena, the prevailing positivist empiricist attitude among the physicists prevented them from considering the causal theory propounded by de Broglie. The whole lot of leading scientists plumped for what later came to be known as the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum phenomena. This revelation comes out in an autobiographical article by David Bohm in the recent *Quantum Implications* which is a collection of thirty essays published in his honour on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

Bohm was one of the victims of Mc Carthyism for his personal views as well as his close connections with Robert Oppenheimer. A year after he arrived at Princeton he was called to appear before the Un-American Activities Committee. Though he pleaded the Fifth Amendment, his plea was rejected and was indicted for contempt of Congress. Hilley and Peat, in their introductory note, state that during this period the University advised Bohm to stay away, "one of the few benefits to emerge from this whole sordid affair". After that, with his contract at Princeton having expired, he was unable to obtain a job in the USA and he was advised by Oppenheimer to leave the country before the full force of McCarthyism took effect. Bohm left for Brazil, where he held a professorship in the University of Sao Paulo from 1951 to 1955 from where he later moved to Britain. So much for academic freedom in the citadel of the Free World, the USA.

As for the hold of ideology, Bohm states that his theory of hidden variables which he propounded in 1952 as a tentative causal theory did not 'catch on' among physicists. It may be recalled that John von Neumann had 'proved' a theorem that quantum mechanics could never be explained in terms of a causal theory. It was Bohm who debunked this theorem by actually constructing a causal quantum theory. But the reception to this work from the veterans was cold. Bohm writes.

The proposals did not actually 'catch on' among physicists. The reasons are quite complex and difficult to assess. Perhaps the main objection was that the theory gave exactly the same predictions for all experimental results as does the usual theory. I myself did not give much weight to these objections. Indeed, it occurred to me that if de Broglie's ideas had won the day at the Solvay Congress of 1927, they might have become the accepted interpretation, then if someone had come along to propose the current interpretation, one could equally well have said that since, after all, it gave no new experimental results, there would be no point in considering it seriously. In other words, I felt that the adoption of the current interpretation was a somewhat fortuitous affair, since it was affected not only by the outcome of the Solvay Congress *but also by the generally positivist empiricist attitude that pervaded physics at the time.* This attitude is in many ways even stronger today, and shows up in the fact that a model that gives insight without an 'empirical pay-off' cannot be taken seriously.

In addition it was important that the whole idea did not appeal to Einstein, probably mainly because it involved the new feature of non-locality, which went against his strongly-held conviction that all connections had to be local. I felt this response of Einstein was particularly unfortunate, both during the Solvay Congress and afterwards, as it almost certainly 'put off' some of those who might otherwise have been interested in this approach. Although I saw clearly at the time that the causal interpretation was not entirely satisfactory, I felt that the insight that it afforded was an important reason why it should be considered, at least as a supplement to the usual interpretation. To have some kind of intuitive model was better, in my view, than to have none at all, for, without such a model, research in quantum theory will consist mainly of the working out of formulae and the comparison of these calculated results with those of experiment. Even more important, the teaching of quantum mechanics will reduce (as it has in effect tended to do) to a kind of indoctrination, aimed at fostering the belief that such a procedure is all that is possible in physics. *Thus new generations of students have grown up who are predisposed to consider such questions with rather closed minds.*

It is precisely this generation of students and their teacher who have to be changed and won over for a rational view towards the world of the small; and to this purpose the brilliant essays in the volume under consideration will surely act as a catalyst.

For, the tentative steps taken by de Broglie in the twenties and by Bohm in 1952 have now established a new line of research, while the recent developments in neutron interferometry and the SQUIDS (superconducting quantum interferometries devices) have indeed thrown a dark shadow over the orthodox quantum theory. The

orthodox quantum theory or the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics (CIQM) has a difficult task in reconciling theory with the new experimental facts of energy transfers in neutron interference observations

This is explained in detail by J.P. Vigiér and his colleagues of the Institute Henri Poincaré in a long article. *Causal particle trajectories and the interpretation of quantum mechanics*. They say that the greatest significance and contribution of Bohm's causal interpretation of quantum mechanics is that it not only exposes the arbitrary philosophical assumptions underlying the claims of the Copenhagen interpretation but also brings into relief the essentially new content of quantum mechanics, which is reflected in different ways in Bohm's interpretation. Indeed the claim that the quantum formalism itself requires us not only to abandon the quest for explanation of quantum phenomena but also the concepts of causality, continuity and the objective reality of individual micro-objects, *is shown to be false*. 'However the existence of the single counter-interpretation proposed by Bohm constitutes sufficient grounds for rejecting the absolute and final necessity of complementary description and indeterminacy, along with the inherent unanalysable and closed nature of quantum phenomena'

THE CAUSAL INTERPRETATION

Originally proposed by de Broglie and independently in 1952 by Bohm the causal interpretation has been recently extended by Vigiér to include a sub-quantum Dirac ether as an underlying physical model. It is the only known interpretation of quantum mechanics in terms of which *all quantum effects can be explained on the basis of causal continuous motions in space and time*

The basic idea is simple to state. A small particle like the electron has its motion described by the Schrodinger equation in terms of a state function, ψ . This is a complex valued function. Now every sophomore in mathematics knows that an equation in complex numbers is equivalent to two equations in real numbers. Also that any complex number can be expressed in the *polar form* $z = r \exp(i\theta)$ where r and θ are real numbers. Writing the complex quantity ψ of Schrodinger's equation in the polar form, $\psi = R \exp(iS/\hbar)$, it can be easily seen that the equation naturally falls apart into two real equations. Bohm showed way back in 1952 that these two equations are (i) the usual Hamilton-Jacobi equation of classical mechanics and (ii) an equation of continuity corresponding to the conservation of a certain quantity $P = R^2$

The resulting Hamilton-Jacobi equation shows that the particle in question is acted on not only by the usual forces like the electromagnetic force but also by an additional force or a quantum potential Q , which is related to R . The velocity of the particle is measured by the gradient of S . The special feature of the quantum potential Q is that it does not weaken with distance because though ψ and R may weaken, in the formula for Q , R appears also in the denominator. Also, the quantum

potential has no external source but it depends in an essential way on the whole apparatus, e.g. the two slit experimental set-up, and it thus reflects correctly the *wholeness* of process, which the genius of Neils Bohr tried to stress but his followers misunderstood

J.P. Vigiér, C Dewdney, P.R. Holland and A. Kiprianidis derive in detail the features of the quantum potential and show how it explains the various quantum phenomena consistently. Each particle has a trajectory that develops causally, but is affected by the rapid fluctuations of the underlying covariant ether. These stochastic fluctuations which are correlated non-locally make the individual particles take up different trajectories, but together the particles form the same interference patterns as predicted by the orthodox quantum theory. The second equation referred to above, namely the equation of continuity, gives the probability of a particle being at a prescribed place by the quantity $P = R^2$, also as required by the orthodox theory, CIQM.

The above described stochastic causal interpretation of quantum mechanics (SIQM) is not a merely mechanistic model with an extra potential. The SIQM brings out *the unity of system and environment*, so clearly demonstrated by the double-slit trajectories, which is revealed as *the essentially new non-classical feature of quantum mechanics*. Of course, the single particle description is an abstraction and this unity is really a reflection of the non-local character of the correlations that arise in the many body case. The non-separability of quantum systems had been emphasised by Schrodinger earlier and by Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen in 1935. Recent experiments of Aspect show that such non-local correlations do exist. These experiments find a perfectly causal explanation through the quantum potential of the SIQM.

Further, the physical interpretation of individual quantum processes in terms of particle trajectories excludes the necessity of introducing the so called wave-packet-collapse. All events occurring in space and time can be attributed to material causes which are also processes taking place in space-time, albeit non-locally. While in the CIQM the behaviour of matter depends on the cognizance of observers, such a possibility does not exist in the SIQM. In the SIQM the material world has an existence independent of the knowledge of observers. Finally it is shown that the CIQM is inadequate in the description of time-dependent neutron interferometry and requires the renunciation of energy conservation in interference situations, whereas the SIQM fully explains this situation.

T.D. Clark's article on *Macroscopic Quantum Objects* describes certain new developments in the area of experimentation which would help in testing the two approaches. A very interesting article on *Complementarity and the Union of Opposites* by M.F.H. Wilkins deals with some fundamental issues at the heart of dialectics.

While the majority of physicists agree that quantum mechanics does not *explain* the basis of phenomena, or as Gell-Mann put it: Quantum

Mechanics (is) that mysterious, confusing discipline which none of us really understands but which we know how to use, there is still a great amount of spiritual lethargy in academic circles which prevents them from looking at causal models. Positivism as a world outlook is content with recipes which churn out the right answers. In such a smothering intellectual atmosphere the arrival of this book is like the opening of a wide window. On Bohm's papers on quantum theory J.S. Bell had said: 'In 1952 I saw the impossible done' Will our present day university academics take in a breath of this fresh air?

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New Physics

Paul Davies (ed.), *The New Physics*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, Price £ 30, pp. 516

During the course of human history, man's involvement with his environment, has led to the quest to determine the ultimate building blocks of the physical world. What remained in the realm of speculative theorisation with Leucippus and Democritus—that all matter consists of a small number of truly elementary particles—has acquired a scientific foundation in our times in the discipline of Elementary Particle Physics. The study of the ultimate constituents of matter and the laws of their combination, i.e. the study of very small things or the micro-world is the domain of this discipline.

The views of the nature of the origin of the universe, the evolution of stars and galaxies, etc., have generated a lot of controversy in the history of human thought. The study of the very large of things comes under cosmology.

Till very recently the cosmologist and the particle physicist seemed to have no common concerns. In recent decades, particularly the last one, the two extremes have found inextricable links. Based on the tenet of modern science that laws of physics discovered on Earth apply all over the universe, leads to a study of the properties of micro-particles, of the birth, motion and properties of stars. Conversely, the observed properties of the universe reveal a great deal about particle physics. For instance, the simple fact that the universe has not collapsed under its own gravity tells us that neutrinos, the most abundant particles, must be exceedingly light, if not all together mass-less. This has prompted a physicist to comment, 'The more we learn of the cosmos, the more we understand particle physics and vice-versa. The ladder of science is closing upon itself to become a snake consuming its own tail : Ouroboros, the alchemist's symbol of eternity.' (Sheldon Glashow)

The image of 'science closing upon itself' underlines the quest for determining a few basic laws and theories in terms of which the entire working of the universe—from the very small, to the very large and the very complex—the three frontier areas of physics—could be understood. The story and various facets of this fascinating quest are the subject matter of the volume under review. The articles contributed by eminent physicists provide an authentic account of the current state of

...strong nuclear forces and
...the 'Big Bang' and what
...after the Big Bang? Are there
...what are self-organising systems? These
...ing questions relating to the state of the art in
...es are dealt with in this volume

...ough it has not been possible to avoid mathematics and
technical jargon altogether in very many articles, the volume as a
whole retains readability for students of physics, philosophy of
science and all those interested in deepening their understanding of the
process of the breakdown of the entrenched beliefs about the nature of
the physical world

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